Between Deaths

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Between Deaths

by inameitlater

Summary

After his travels in "Sounders of Three", Will returned to the fall from the cliff and survived it, as did Hannibal.
But time travel changes you and Will and Hannibal have to get to know each other again.

A/N: This is not what you are expecting. :)

Notes

End OTW Racism: A Call To Action: https://end-otw-racism.tumblr.com/

Blanket permission for translations, podfic, fanfic in this timeline/universe, fanart, etc. Have fun, let me know if possible and link to the fic, please. Thank you! :)

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Thank you so much for all your help! All remaining errors are mine.

- Translation into Русский available: Между смертями by Vi_Ehwaz
- Translation into 中文-普通话 國語 available: Between Deaths 险象环生 by Youngyajiao
- Translation into 日本語 available: Between Deaths by Hitsuji_Trap

Prologue

The prologue is part of the last chapter of "Sounders of Three". You don't need to read it if you just read "Sounders of Three".

~TWO~

Falling.

Crashing in ice cold water feet first and pain.

Hannibal was a dead weight and later Will wouldn't remember how he managed to drag them to the rocks. He was aware again when he laid on the rocks. He didn't feel cold and knew that was a bad sign. Hannibal was still beside him. The waves were loud and filled his mind.

Pain woke him. Two people were carrying him. His limbs dragged over rocks and his injuries hurt. Will opened his eyes. It was still dark.

"Hannibal?" he asked weakly. His voice was distorted from the wound.

"He is alive," a woman said.

Chiyoh, Will thought and relaxed slightly.

He was dropped and he screamed in pain. He was shaking when he opened his eyes. He saw a wooden floor.

The boat, Will thought.

"Are you awake?" Chiyoh asked.

Will groaned, unable to speak.

Someone, a man, moved him onto his back. It wasn't Hannibal, but an elderly man with sharp cheekbones and grey hair. He looked distressed.

"They both need a doctor," the man said looking away from Will. He had a faint French sounding accent.

"Hannibal," Will said barely comprehensible. Hannibal was a doctor.

"He is unconscious," Chiyoh answered from out of his line of sight. "We need to bring him down the cabin."

They moved him with difficulty. Will tried to relax as much as he could, considering the pain, to make it easier for them. They lifted him onto the bed beside another body.

Hannibal, Will realized and reached out for him with a shaking hand. Hannibal was cold. Will froze in fear until he saw him breathe shallowly.

"We need to move," Chiyoh said. "Can you look after them?"

"Yes, yes," the man said. "I can take care of them, but we need a doctor."

"I will try to find one," she said and left.

The man started to cut off their clothes. Normally Will would have freaked out about a stranger with a knife so close to him, but he was too tired at the moment. He looked at Hannibal again and blacked out.

Pain woke him as something was pressed against his shoulder. Will tried to fight it off, but he was too weak.

"Please don't fight me," the man said. "I'm bandaging your shoulder so you don't bleed out."

After a long period of pain, the man sighed.

"I need to move you off the bed to fix the bandage and put one on Hannibal."

Moving off the bed seemed impossible, but Will tried to nod. The man was trying to help. He lost consciousness during the move.

Later he woke up again. He was on the floor, but he was lying on some blankets and a few were covering him. Bandages were around his face and stabbed shoulder. He wanted to move to see Hannibal, but his body wouldn't move as he wanted it to and his mouth was full of bloody gunk. He turned his head to the side and tried to spit it out. When he couldn't, he started sobbing silently. The movements caused so much pain that he blacked out again.

The next time he woke up the pain had lessened and he felt a little fuzzy, probably from painkillers. He was warm and could feel stitches in his tongue. He opened his eyes and found himself in a room that reminded him of a high-class hotel. There was a bright window, but Will couldn't see through the curtains. When Will turned to look at the opposite side of the room, he saw Hannibal in the other bed. It wasn't a hospital bed, but like Will, he was on an

IV and a half full catheter bag was taped to the bed frame. Will's thoughts went to his own dick and yes, there was a catheter in him too. Exhausted, Will waited for a while, but nobody came and he fell asleep again.

He must have gotten a fever, because his next waking moments were a jumbled mess. The worried faces of Chiyoh and the stranger hovered over him. He dreamt of dying or having Hannibal's death on his hands; worlds and worlds destroyed.

Clarity returned in little steps.

Waking up, he found a very tired looking Hannibal sitting beside his bed. He reached for him and fell asleep with the comforting dry warmth of Hannibal's hand in his.

His upper body was being lifted and a straw was put in his mouth. The water was wonderful, but swallowing was agony. He choked and started coughing until he was so exhausted he fell asleep.

"Hannibal?" he asked, barely audible when the stranger exchanged the bags on his IV. It still hurt to speak. The man looked at Will and sat down on the bed.

"He is doing exercises," he said. "He will be back soon. How do you feel?"

Will tried to smack his lips, but they were too dry. Realizing this, the man helped him sit up slightly and held a water cup with a straw to his mouth. Remembering his coughing fit, Will drank slowly. Swallowing wasn't easy. When the pain faded, Will realized how horrible his mouth tasted. The stranger took the cup away and patted Will's hand.

"It's good that you are awake," he told Will. "Hannibal was worried."

Will wanted to ask many things, but he was tired already and knew he wouldn't stay awake long. Frowning, he pointed at the man. He looked confusedly back at Will until he understood. He laughed for a second.

"My name is Robert. I'm Hannibal's uncle," he answered. Surprise at this news kept Will awake a little longer until exhaustion pulled him down to sleep.

Arguing voices woke Will. He turned his head towards the voices. Hannibal was in a wheelchair beside his bed and the man, Robert, his uncle, was beside him. They were speaking in French. Will absent-mindedly wondered why they weren't speaking Lithuanian.

Hannibal said something that sounded like begging and Robert sighed and left. Hannibal looked at Will and their eyes met. Surprise made Hannibal's eyes widen for a moment.

"Will," he said and smiled. He looked sad. It was an unusual look on Hannibal. Will tried to speak, but Hannibal shook his head.

"Don't speak," he told him. "The wound on your tongue got infected. You fought it off, but it was very close for a while. You should rest your tongue for as long as you can."

Will blinked to show he had understood and looked pointedly at the wheelchair.

“My back has been damaged. There is a high chance my ability to walk will return with time and rest.”

Weakly, Will reached out with his hand and Hannibal took it. Will thought he should feel guilty, but the decision to pull them over the cliff had been made such a long time ago. He was just happy they had survived. The realization shook him. They had survived and he was now after the fall. Traveling in the past was over, he hoped. Now there was a chance to be with his Hannibal. Silently and in pain, Will started to cry.

“What’s wrong?” Hannibal asked, leaning forward in the wheelchair and squeezing Will’s hand.

Will squeezed back and tried to speak; sounds escaped him, that didn’t make any words. Frustrated and in pain, Will closed his eyes. The emotional turmoil had tired him. He could feel himself begin to drift off. It was frustrating. He wanted to speak to Hannibal now that he had him back. And he needed to think about what had happened and how he would continue. But his body gave out on him. Right before he stopped being aware, he heard Hannibal speak.

“My Will,” he said gently and kissed Will’s hand. “I’m glad to see you again.”

It took three more phases of being awake before Will could ask Hannibal what he had meant by that.

Once, Chiyoh was there when he woke up. Silently she helped him drink and urged him to sleep more. The next time Robert was with him and he smiled while he helped Will drink. Now that Will knew that the man was related to Hannibal, he saw similarities. But Robert was extremely cordial in comparison to Hannibal. Will would have liked to ask him how he dealt with what Hannibal was, but he was still easily tired and couldn’t speak properly. His tongue was healing and the swelling had decreased, but he was still unable to form understandable words.

The next time he woke up, a notepad and a pen were lying by his right hand and Hannibal was sleeping in the other bed; the wheelchair stood between them. It felt unreal to be back, or better to have moved forward and not be waking up in the past. Maybe part of that feeling came from the painkillers he was obviously on. Carefully he reached up to his face and touched the wound dressing. He could feel the little stitches through the gauze. He was really here.

Will wondered what would happen now and how it would be to be with Hannibal. And he wondered how much he himself had changed. The stress of the time jumps and the insights they had brought had worn him down. There was a possibility that his current tiredness came not only from the wound, but also from his emotional exhaustion. He studied Hannibal in the other bed. He seemed tired too and not being able to walk must be frustrating for him.

Hannibal would know Will had changed, he thought. He wouldn’t be able to hide his changes from Hannibal and he didn’t want to. Will wanted to share his experiences with him. He wanted to build up on the insights he had gained. There was a chance Hannibal would think

he was crazy, but Will hoped the knowledge he had now would help him make Hannibal believe him.

With much effort, Will moved himself into a halfway sitting position. He rested a while afterwards, tired from it. The urge to communicate helped him stay awake and write. First, he wrote his questions on the top page. Having finished this, he struggled to write a short explanation of his experiences. He probably wouldn't start with this topic until he could speak, but just in case, he wanted to have it ready. Starting to write it took him a while, but in the end, he managed a few sentences.

"Hannibal, during the fall, something happened to me. I know this will be hard to grasp or believe.

I thought I had died and had woken up in the past; in a time in which we were strangers. I tried to live there and to be with you, but it resulted in my death. Again, I didn't really die but woke up…"

Hannibal moved and Will put the paper away and looked over. He was awake and watching Will.

Will waved. Hannibal smiled and sat up. His movements were stiff and he was dragging his whole body with the strength of his arms. With his gunshot wound all movements had to hurt. Frowning and worried, Will watched Hannibal sit up in bed and pull his legs over the edge. He pulled the wheelchair over and maneuvered himself into it with great effort. Will didn't like to watch and he wanted to help. He was also surprised Hannibal was showing him so much of his vulnerability.

"Hello," Hannibal greeted when he had rolled over to Will. He smiled, but he wasn't as carefree as when they left after the dragon broke them free. "Would you like to drink some water?"

Will nodded and watched Hannibal roll over to the bedside table, fill a cup for Will and carefully bring it to him. He took it and it was incredibly heavy even though it was just half full. The water was clear and his mouth seemed to soak half of it straight in. Swallowing still hurt. Hannibal took the empty cup from him as Will finished. His movements were slow. Will pointed at the place where the dragon's bullet had penetrated him.

"The wound is healing well," Hannibal answered his unspoken question.

Will took his sheet of questions and circled "Should you really move with your injuries?" before he gave the page to Hannibal. He took it and read over all the questions before he answered Will.

"I should not overdo it," Hannibal said. "But some movement and exercise is recommended."

Take it slow, please, Will thought and reached out for Hannibal's hand. When they took hold of each other's, Will felt himself relax.

“As of your other questions,” Hannibal continued and studied the page. “We are safe for the moment. It’s an apartment my family owns, but as it wasn’t found when I was arrested, I don’t believe it will be found now.”

Will nodded satisfied with the answer and squeezed Hannibal’s hand briefly.

“Your shoulder wound is healing well, you need to start physical therapy soon,” Hannibal said and frowned at Will’s shoulder. He was avoiding Will’s eyes as he spoke. It was unusual for him. “It’s not the first time your shoulder got hurt. We have to be diligent with the exercises to ensure your flexibility.”

Will took the notepad, turned the page and wrote on it before holding it up for Hannibal to read.

Something is wrong?

Hannibal read it and looked away. It made Will even more nervous. He wanted to reach out and hold him tight, to make sure he didn’t slip away. Will didn’t think he could survive losing Hannibal again.

“Hannibal,” Will tried to say and Hannibal turned and shook his head.

“Don’t, Will,” Hannibal said. “Don’t hurt yourself, please.”

Will tried to urge him with his mind to speak about whatever it was. He had tried to kill them after all, maybe Hannibal had had enough.

“Nothing is wrong,” Hannibal said and stroked Will’s hand with his index finger. “Something has changed. I wanted to speak with you after you had recovered more and you could speak.”

Shaking his head, Will gestured for him to continue.

“Very well,” Hannibal said and sighed. He looked up into Will’s eyes.

“Will, during the fall, something happened to me.”

Chapter 1

Chapter Summary

Will just realized that Hannibal time travelled too.

Please check out the art for this chapter by the wonderful damalisca. <3

There was no break for Will, no moment to breathe and relax. The realization hit him like a brick. He reached out, painfully aware of the bruises on his body, and gripped Hannibal's arm. Frowning and with heavy-lidded eyes Hannibal stopped speaking and looked at Will.

He wanted to tell Hannibal everything, or at least what had happened to him. He couldn't though. His injuries made it nearly impossible to speak. He reached for the paper on which he had written similar words to what Hannibal had just said and placed it into Hannibal's hand. He read it with a blank face while Will fretted. As Hannibal looked up, Will could see wonder in his eyes.

"You travelled through time?"

Will nodded.

"Did you..." Hannibal avoided Will's eyes and gripped the note so tightly, the paper wrinkled. "Did you move to another point in time whenever you died?"

Will nodded again. He took Hannibal's hand in his own. The grip on the paper loosened. Will wanted to ask what was wrong.

"Did I kill you?"

Will blinked in surprise.

Of course, he thought, of course Hannibal had killed him.

He was glad he couldn't say it aloud. Hannibal sighed anyway. He must have read Will's answer from his face.

"I'm sorry."

How weird it was to hear these words from Hannibal. Will hadn't thought he would ever hear them.

Lie down with me, Will mouthed, voiceless, ignoring the pain it caused, and patted the empty space beside him. This was Hannibal, so it didn't feel right to call him distraught, but something was definitely wrong. At first, Hannibal didn't follow Will's invitation. Will had to pull on his hand and breathe a barely audible "please" before he nodded and complied.

It was hard to watch Hannibal lift himself out of the wheelchair and onto the bed. Will felt guilty watching him struggle. His hands itched to help him, but he was too weak to be useful. Hannibal maneuvered himself on his back and Will had to lie on his side. The bed wasn't wide enough for both of them. Luckily, his shoulder and cheek wounds were on the same side, it made it easier for him.

Hannibal was breathing hard as they finally settled on the bed. Will placed his hand on his sternum and felt his breathing slow down. He was staring at the ceiling. *To avoid eye contact*, Will thought.

He pressed his lips together in frustration. If he couldn't talk, Hannibal would have to read his words. He was more than capable of doing that if he would look at him. Will moved his arm upwards in pain and pinched Hannibal's left nipple through the shirt. The man twitched violently and focused on him. Will smirked and then flinched at the pain the movement caused him. The cheek wound wasn't healed enough for big facial movements.

"I had not expected you to have similar experiences," Hannibal explained. Will nodded and made a circular motion with his fingers to continue.

"I wanted to tell you what happened to me to avoid... confusion between us."

Me too, Will mouthed, ignoring the pain it caused and pointing at himself. Hannibal smiled.

"I believe discussing our experiences in detail will have to wait until you can talk again."

Will frowned slightly, even that hurt, and shook his head a little. He didn't want to put this on hold. However, he also didn't know how to express himself well enough to make Hannibal talk to him.

Unhappily, he nodded in agreement. Hannibal touched his face gently and smoothed over Will’s frown. Will relaxed his face and felt the pain reduce

"Do you want to stay with me?" Hannibal asked, watching Will.

Yes, Will mouthed with a hint of a smile. He pointed at Hannibal and raised his eyebrows for a moment.

"Yes, Will, I want to stay with you too."

Good, Will thought.

He felt as if he should keep their conversation going, but he was already exhausted.

Will carefully placed his arm over Hannibal's chest and put his head against his shoulder. He listened to Hannibal breathing. It was soothing. Hearing him breathe meant he was alive. At some point Hannibal's body became softer and heavier under Will's touch. He had fallen asleep.

Will dozed until he heard the sound of a door opening. He looked over Hannibal and watched Robert come into the room. First, he smiled as he saw them, but when his eyes found the wheelchair, he stopped smiling and sighed. Surprisingly, Hannibal hadn't woken up yet, so Will didn't try to call out when Robert left the room.

For a while, Will pondered over the visit. Why had Robert left so quickly? Will hadn't thought Hannibal had any family left apart from Chiyoh, who seemed a lot like one of his fledglings. Will realized he now had an opportunity to find out more about Hannibal's past. He fell into a light slumber still thinking about it.

He clung to Hannibal when he woke up. His muscles were cramping and Will groaned, which caused agony to radiate through his face. The healing cheek wasn't happy about being moved.

"You are due for a new IV and more antibiotics and painkillers," Hannibal said softly. Even the breath hitting Will's forehead made him ache. "The infection has weakened you."

Hannibal disentangled himself from Will and called for Robert. Soon the other man was in the room and helped Hannibal into the wheelchair. Again they spoke in French, which Will found annoying, but he didn't have the energy to complain about it. The next hour or so was blurry in Will's memory. Hannibal wanted him on pain pills instead of the intravenous drugs, so Will had to swallow some pills with water. It hurt and he took deep breaths until the pain receded. Afterwards, they put him on a new IV and he was given some small ice chips. The cold helped with the pain.

"We rinsed your mouth regularly with hydrogen peroxide solution when you were unconscious," Hannibal explained to him as Robert went to the ensuite bathroom. He left the door open. Will heard him open cupboards.

"When the painkillers start working, we will take you to the bathroom for another rinse," Hannibal said watching Will carefully. Will frowned a little, careful not to move the muscles of his face too much.

"I would also like to take out the catheter," Hannibal added. Will couldn't suppress a flinch. He took deep breaths until the pain lessened and smoothed his face to avoid hurting himself more. Feeling defeated, Will nodded. Taking the catheter out wouldn't be nice, but he knew leaving it in wasn't an option long-term.

They took the IV off but left the cannula in and Robert helped him into the bathroom after

Will made them aware that the painkillers had worked. The mouth rinse was okay, it tasted weird but not too bad. Spitting it out was the hard part and for the second round he just hung his head over the sink with Robert's help and let it flow out of his mouth. That was less painful than spitting.

Will blanked out when the catheter was removed. It wasn't really painful, but he didn't like the experience. Walking into the quiet of the stream as Hannibal clinically looked after his body was better.

"You can come back now," Hannibal said when it was over. Will felt him petting his hair and made himself return. He found Robert watching them, curious. Will remembered his thoughts before he fell asleep and wondered if Robert had as many questions for him as he had for Robert.

"Would you help Will back to bed?" Hannibal asked his uncle without looking backwards.

"Of course," Robert agreed. He helped Will up and half carried him into the bedroom.

"Hannibal did that too when he was younger," Robert said in a very low voice and with a hint of a French accent as Will was back in his bed. "He went inside himself and it was impossible to reach him. Well, at least it was for me."

Without thinking, Will patted his hand to comfort him. Robert's eyebrows rose in surprise. Will would have liked to explain that he understood him. Reaching Hannibal was hard and not always successful. He smiled down at Will. It was Hannibal's smile on a slightly older and gentler face. Will thought it might be easy for him to like Robert, after all, he loved that smile.

"Do you think he would like to sleep beside you?" Robert asked and eyed the other bed. Will followed his look and nodded.

"Hmm…," Robert said. "I will need Chiyoh's help. I'm not young anymore."

As he left Will wondered how old he was. He didn't look that much older than Hannibal. His guess would be that they were maybe 15 years apart. Hannibal's father or mother must have been a good bit older than their brother. Will checked the bathroom door. It was closed with Hannibal behind it. He had an uncle and parents. It made Hannibal more human.

Robert came back into the room accompanied by Chiyoh. Will made eye contact with her for a short moment before she looked away. Together, they moved Hannibal's bed to Will's. Will heard the bathroom door open while they were at it. Hannibal rolled into the room and raised his eyebrows slightly as he saw them work. Robert was out of breath afterwards and sat down on the bed. Chiyoh watched him, worried.

"Thank you," Hannibal said from the bathroom door. Will watched as Robert realized Hannibal had seen him. He straightened and consciously tried to breathe slower. *To not show*

Hannibal a weakness, Will thought. Still he turned and looked at Hannibal with a hopeful little smile. Will remembered the Hannibal who had been his lover and their conversation about Hannibal's uncle teaching him how to draw. He had taught Hannibal in the hope of connecting with his nephew. And they had, at least for a little while. He must love Hannibal a great deal if he was still willing to come to his rescue in the knowledge of what Hannibal was and what he was helping him to do.

"Well," Robert said and looked away as if caught, "better than you two sleeping on one small bed with your injuries."

He was used to having his affection being rejected, Will thought.

Hannibal surprised both of them as he rolled the wheelchair beside the bed and his uncle and asked: "Would you help me into bed, Uncle Robert?"

Will saw Chiyoh frown at the interaction. She was watching both men like a hawk. Drawn between loyalties, Will realized and stumped because… Hannibal was acting in a different way than she would have expected.

It was exciting to watch all the interactions and learn more about the relationships the three had with each other, but it was also exhausting. Will closed his eyes as Robert helped Hannibal lie down. He had planned to open them again after Robert and Chiyoh had left the room, but his body had other ideas.

The next time Will was awake was a blur of bodily functions. Hannibal wasn't there. But antibiotics, painkillers and water were waiting beside the bed. Robert was watching him from an armchair. When the painkillers kicked in, he helped Will to the bathroom. Will struggled to urinate on his own and washing his hands was exhausting.

"Hannibal said to rinse your mouth again," Robert said through the partially open bathroom door. Will sighed and leaned on the sink. The mouth rinse was in easy reach and he had another round of rinsing. It was hard, but at least his mouth felt less nasty afterwards. He would have liked to have brushed his teeth, but doing it without help was unimaginable right now. Robert helped him back to the bed when he came out of the bathroom. He made Will drink more water and informed him that Hannibal was doing stretches with Chiyoh. Will drank as much as he could before he slept again.

The dance repeated. Waking up, with or without Hannibal beside him; taking antibiotics and painkillers; to the bathroom with Chiyoh's or Robert's help; urinating, which became easier every time; rinsing his mouth, some light toothbrushing when he could bear it; and more sleep. Sometimes there was an IV working its way into Will's bloodstream and sometimes there wasn't. The periods between sleep became longer and after what felt like a few days, Hannibal offered him some broth. There was nothing to chew in it and it tasted bland, but swallowing it was still so hard. Will stopped after eating half of it. He wanted more, but swallowing made him feel miserable.

"It's quite alright, Will," Hannibal said soothingly. "You ate more than I thought you would be able to."

Will balled his hands to fists as he fought the urge to throw the spoon at Hannibal. Recovering from a serious wound, followed by an infection took time, he knew that logically. Starting to eat after Hannibal had gutted him had been excruciatingly painful too.

“We will put you on another IV,” Hannibal decided. The words made Will even more frustrated with his body and he could feel tears building in his eyes. Will put the hand of his healthy arm over his eyes to hide it. Of course, Hannibal still knew he wasn’t well.

“There is no shame in being weak after an injury, Will.”

If he could have, Will would have snorted. He fucking knew that.

“And while it might not feel like it, your recovery is progressing nicely.”

Will became tense as Hannibal spoke. Intellectually, he knew Hannibal was right. Emotionally, he wanted to throw something hard against his head, or against the wall; he wasn’t, after all, frustrated with Hannibal. Will lifted his hand from his eyes and sighed nearly silently.

“We have to move soon,” Hannibal told him and Will looked at him. He didn’t feel like he could move yet. It must have shown on his face.

“I too would prefer a longer convalescence,” Hannibal said. “But our demise by falling off the cliff is being questioned by the public and most likely also by the authorities. I believe the best course of action is to separate and leave the country.”

Will shook his head frantically. He didn’t want to be apart from Hannibal. He reached out for Hannibal and grabbed his arm. He wanted to speak. Unfortunately, speaking was still out of the question. He tried to convey his disagreement with only his eyes. Hannibal’s face softened.

“I would prefer to stay with you as well,” he told Will and patted his arm. “But to stay safe, I believe it’s necessary to divide our group. Do you want to hear the concrete plans?”

Will didn’t want to hear it. He wanted Hannibal to change his plan and for them to stay together. It was unlikely to happen. Defeated, Will nodded and listened.

Preparations started the next day. Will lost most of his hair to Robert’s hands while sitting on a chair in the bathroom. As his injuries and weight loss couldn’t be hidden, they had decided to camouflage him as a cancer patient. Staring in the mirror, Will had to agree that he looked the part, especially with his hair shortened and partially shaved off at some parts of his skull.

“Hannibal will hate it,” Robert said conspiratorially as he was finished with Will’s head. Will suppressed a smirk. He wasn’t wrong.

“He always liked curly hair like in a Bo…”, Robert stopped talking and as Will looked up in the mirror, he saw that the man had turned pale.

Botticelli, Will thought. Like in a Botticelli painting, was what Robert had wanted to say, and Will knew why that caused him distress. During Hannibal’s hearing, his past as “Il Mostro” had become known, even if it couldn’t be proven. Freddie had picked it up in her book, as had Frederick. Will wondered if Robert had read them or had found out from the news coverage. He watched the older man carefully. He would have liked to comfort him, and also to ask him a dozen questions, but it wouldn’t happen now, not without being able to speak.

Robert seemed to get himself under control after a moment and helped Will back to bed. Will put the IV back into the cannula, drank more water and closed his eyes. Dozing, he heard Robert come back in the room and leave through the other door. He was close to falling asleep when the door opened again and Hannibal rolled the wheelchair inside. Will watched under his half-closed eyes as Chiyoh helped Hannibal into bed. As she left, Will opened his eyes. Hannibal looked as exhausted as Will felt. Will suppressed the smile that wanted to form on his lips as their eyes met. Hannibal looked at his hair and frowned.

You are a sentimental idiot, Will thought fondly and rolled his eyes.

“I prefer your hair longer,” Hannibal said in defense. Will thought that they understood each other quite well when it came to the little things. He maneuvered himself closer to Hannibal, put his head on his arm, careful not the dislocate the IV. He took one of Hannibal’s hands and placed it on his shortened hair. Slowly Hannibal moved over the stubble and Will felt himself relax as the touches became more confident. Will sighed and closed his eyes.

“It is a nice tactile sensation though,” Hannibal said after a few minutes.

Will huffed.

“We will leave in the next few days,” he told Will while still continuing to explore the bone structure of Will’s skull. “It depends on when our new papers arrive. We have arranged for… separate suppliers.”

Will gave a tiny nod, knowing Hannibal would feel it with his hand on his head. Hannibal’s fingers moved down from his head to his ears. Will closed his eyes and relaxed as Hannibal’s fingers traced over the tops of his ears. It was nice. After all the pain he had felt during the last few days, and the emotional turmoil the time travel had caused him, gentleness was pleasant.

He woke up drooling on Hannibal’s shirt. Will closed his mouth and swallowed without thinking. It hurt, but not as much as it had a few days ago when he first woke up. He looked up and found Hannibal asleep. He put his head back down, avoiding the drool. For a while, he just rested and tried not to think.

Soon his mind started circling around their situation. Though he was happy to be back with Hannibal, the fact that Hannibal had time traveled too was making things more complicated. Hannibal didn’t shy away from contact, but he had spent a lot of time outside the room in the

last couple of days. He had also avoided looking into Will's eyes on more than one occasion. Instead of poking at Will's mind and finding out what had happened to him, he had let him rest. It wasn't like Hannibal to let Will rest. He had been truthful when he had told Will something had happened to him. It was weird to think something could have happened to Hannibal. Normally Hannibal happened to others. However, time travel, as Will had personally discovered, was a strong force to be reckoned with.

If he had to guess, he would say Hannibal felt guilty about something. It was a curious idea. Hannibal feeling guilt seemed foreign to his nature. If Hannibal had travelled under the same rules as Will, he must have died or gotten Will killed. He had probably killed Will at least once. Will wanted to ask him, wanted to find out every detail and share everything that happened to him. He didn't want any secrets between them.

Will lay awake and thought about it. He wanted to solve this and be close to Hannibal again, but he didn't really have all the information he needed. He looked up at Hannibal's face, which was soft and relaxed in sleep. Maybe he needed some time. Will would be an ass not to give it to him. But it did go against his own wants. He wanted to crawl into Hannibal.

There is time, Will promised himself. They had time now, together.

Their documents arrived the next day. Will stared at an old picture of himself and was amazed of how aged the passport itself looked. Maybe it was an old one that Hannibal had made for him. If there were mugshots of him and people looked too close at the passport, they might recognize him. The thought made him anxious. He felt like shit right now and he was worried about Hannibal, but being here together in this flat felt safe. Leaving it was a little frightening, especially as he and Hannibal would take different routes out of the States.

The next time Will was in the bathroom for his now routine of peeing, washing his hands and rinsing his mouth, he stared into the mirror for a long time. He didn't look like the man in the picture anymore. He was gaunt, his hair was just stubble with shaved patches and his injured cheek was plastered over with a bandage. He hadn't looked at the wound yet. The nick on his tongue was healing but he had preferred not to look at the new disfigurement. Now though, he started to tug on the corners of the gauze and slowly peeled it off. The cut was held together by very fine stitching, finer then he had ever seen. Still, the corners of the scar where slightly contorted.

"It is healing nicely," Hannibal said. Will turned his head and saw him in the doorway in his wheelchair. "For a wound that got infected."

Will nodded once in acknowledgement and stumbled back to sit on the edge of the bathtub. Hannibal wheeled into the room.

"If you dislike it, we can correct it in about a year when the healing is complete."

Will shrugged with his healthy shoulder, the injured one hurt. He wasn't sure if he cared about a scar. Maybe Hannibal would dislike it. It wasn't from him after all.

“Not being able to speak is a challenge,” Hannibal mused as he rolled up beside Will and took his hand. He squeezed it for a moment and Will squeezed back. He sighed. There was so much to say, but his injuries stopped him. Hannibal reached for the cut on his cheek and touched the skin beside it. His fingers were cool against the warmth of the healing wound.

“We have both changed,” Hannibal said and took his hand away. Will stopped himself from reaching out to hold on to him. He wanted to dig his nails in Hannibal’s flesh until he hit bone, until Hannibal couldn’t hide whatever he was hiding from him.

“You want me to tell you,” Hannibal said and looked away. It made Will angry. He had gone through hell to get here. Hannibal was his and he wouldn’t even look at him.

“I did not expect to end up in the here and now, Will.”

Finally, Hannibal looked back up to Will and met his angry eyes.

“I know you have questions, I have questions too,” he said confessionally. “But I’m not ready. I need time to process what has happened and I want you to be able to talk too. I don’t want any misunderstandings and for that we both need to be able to speak.”

Will pulled himself up. He nearly fell into Hannibal and had to use his hurt arm to stabilize himself on the wheelchair. Sharp pain made him hiss. Below him, Hannibal was holding the wheels, so it wouldn’t roll away.

He is looking out for me, Will thought and it made him calm down. When he was sure he could stand steadily, he took his hands off the chair and pointed sharply at the door. Hannibal didn’t argue, he turned the chair slowly and then stopped, looking over his shoulder.

“Would you like to hold on?” he asked.

Will recognized the gesture as the peace offering it was and nodded. Slowly they made their way back to their conjoined beds. Will was shaking as they arrived there. He sat down and picked up the writing pad from the bedside table. His injured arm made it impossible for him to hold it and write. Without being asked, Hannibal took the pad and held it while Will carefully wrote.

Do you want to stay together? Will wrote.

“Yes,” Hannibal answered without hesitation.

Forever?

“Until death do us part,” Hannibal promised solemnly.

No death by your hand?!

“No,” Hannibal said. His voice sounded rough. “I will never kill you again, Will.”

Will exhaled at the words. His hand was shaking from exhaustion but he wasn’t finished.

Me neither, he wrote. *Promise*!

“Shall we kiss?” Hannibal asked with a sudden devious smile. Will couldn’t help it. He laughed and then cried from the pain it had caused him. He made himself relax his face and nodded with tears on his cheeks. He wanted a kiss, it would be their first. He had never kissed this Hannibal before.

Will let the pad fall and reached for Hannibal. It should have felt awkward, but Will didn’t care. When their lips met in a closed mouthed kiss he felt so relieved he started to cry again. He leaned his forehead against Hannibal’s when they separated, breathing harshly.

“You need to lie down,” Hannibal said after a while. “Let me take care of your wound and I will join you in bed afterwards.”

Will didn’t want to let him go. He knew though, that his body would give out soon. Hannibal’s promise to join him also helped.

When he was lying in bed, he watched Hannibal return to the bathroom. He came back and made Will take another pain pill before he disinfected the wound and put a new bandage on. Afterwards he called for Chiyoh to Will’s surprise. He must have been tired too if he didn’t try to get into bed by himself. Will closed his eyes as she helped Hannibal and unwillingly fell asleep.

The next day brought more routine. Eating broth, rinsing his mouth, brushing his teeth, antibiotics and another IV. Hannibal added a short introduction into how to start stretching and training his shoulder. To Will’s amusement, Hannibal had loaded a bunch of YouTube videos with exercises on a tablet for him. It was as adorable as it was amusing. Hannibal left the tablet with him as he went for his own stretches with Chiyoh. Will couldn’t resist checking the news sites for information about them. As he scrolled through the clutter of political news, he got frustrated. One escaped serial killer and a missing FBI consultant didn’t seem to be big enough news. He opened Tattle Crime after some consideration and got all the information and gossip he was looking for.

They had found the cliff house. Will felt a jolt of irritation as he saw photos of FBI agents searching the property. The house felt like it was his and Hannibal’s. He didn’t want them to crawl all over it. It was an irrational thought. Will made himself ignore it and checked for more relevant information. They were presumed dead. He guessed that was due to the video the dragon had taken. The forensic evidence should also show that they went over the cliff.

There were, of course, no bodies and Freddie was working hard on the angle of them possibly being alive. There was even a betting pool on which of them might have survived. But

outside of Freddie's site and similar portals, everyone had gone with "presumed dead". It was comforting to see, but it didn't prevent Will from worrying. He didn't want to be caught. It was also strange to be back in this situation. He estimated that he had spent about a year in different timelines. As he had moved towards the fall, he hadn't thought about surviving. After all, surviving a fall from that height, injured as they had been, was incredibly unlikely.

Now they had to recover from their wounds and flee the country while they dealt with the knowledge that they had both been time travellers. In retrospect, the time travel seemed less complicated. At least he had known the situations he had woken up in very well and had been able to manipulate them. But he was with the right Hannibal now; his Hannibal. A Hannibal that had been changed by whatever had happened to him, but still Will's.

He stared at the wall for a while and thought about the possessiveness he felt. It wasn't healthy, but he didn't want to change it.

As if to test himself, Will did a quick search for Molly and Walter. She had been released from the hospital. Afterwards nobody had heard from her. She had probably gone to her family or friends to avoid the media. In a while the media would forget her. Maybe they would contact her on the anniversary of the fall and she would tell them to go away. He hoped she would be left in peace. There was nothing he could do about it, but he didn't wish her ill. He hoped she would be happy again at some point.

He decided to take a look at what was going on in the rest of the world. Seeing issues that had only just started when he had begun to help with the Red Dragon case play out was calming. The world was moving forward again. He wasn't caught in the past anymore.

The door opened and Hannibal navigated the wheelchair into the room. He raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"Have you been awake the whole time?" he asked.

Will gave him a half-sided shrug. Hannibal eyed the tablet.

"How goes the hunt?"

That made Will hesitate. He would have thought Hannibal was keeping up to date about their case. He called up Tattle Crime again and held the tablet out for Hannibal. He wheeled beside the bed and took it from Will. He swiped through the articles and Will watched him smile, amused as he read.

"Freddie stays true to herself," he commented as he gave Will the tablet back. Will would have liked to know what was going on in his head. Why hadn't he kept up with their case? He also wanted Hannibal to come to bed again. But leaving the wheelchair on his own took a lot out of Hannibal and Will knew he had preparations to make today. So, he didn't ask. But he held on to Hannibal's hand until he fell asleep.

Night had fallen when he woke up again and he was in pain. His next dose of painkillers were long overdue and were waiting for him on his bedside table. Someone should have

woken him, Will thought and took the pills. He waited until they kicked in before he slowly made his way to the bathroom. He rinsed his mouth and tried to pee, but he had barely anything in him. He realized that his next IV was overdue too. Frowning slightly and in some pain, he stumbled back to bed and drank some water. He couldn't hear anyone. He took a moment to find the energy to stand up again and gradually walked to the door.

When he reached the door, he held onto it for a few minutes to catch his breath. When he felt able to stand on his own again, he opened the door and stepped into the corridor. There were doors to the left and right of it, but he still couldn't hear anyone. Keeping hold of the wall, Will went to the first door. An empty bedroom. The bed was made and he couldn't say if it had been in use recently.

Panic gave Will the energy to continue to the next room. It was another bedroom. A small leather jacket had been thrown on the bed covers. Getting tired, Will searched the remaining flat. There was a living room, a kitchen, a dining room and another bathroom. All of them were empty. The only unopened door left was the door to the outside world. Will's first thought was what if he opened it and woke up somewhere else and in another time. He stared from the exit to the other end of the corridor; to the door to his and Hannibal's room. He didn't know what to do. He wasn't even sure if this was real. The fear of having hallucinated or dreamed being here with Hannibal made Will freeze. He knew he should move, should check if there was a message for him. Hannibal wouldn't have left him without a message.

But maybe he was never here, suggested a mean voice in his mind.

A phone rang.

Will blinked. He didn't understand the noise at first. When he did, another wave of panicked frenzy made him shake and move hastily. He nearly fell over from exhaustion. He had moved more in the last few minutes than in all the days before together. He hurried to the living room, where he had seen the phone, but he was incredibly slow. The panic over being abandoned was joined by the fear of missing whoever was calling.

The phone stopped when he reached the living room. Will screamed in frustration and took hold of a chair. He had missed it! Breathing heavily he leaned over the chair. He felt his legs weaken under him. Before he could sit down, his legs gave way and he crashed to the floor.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

> When we last saw Will, he was alone in the flat he had previously shared with Hannibal, Chiyoh and Robert.

Please check out the art for this chapter by the amazing itspurpleflower. <3

Will woke up in agony as small hands lifted his head and put it on a pillow. His arms and legs were straightened. Will opened his eyes and found Chiyoh beside him.

“I will get your painkillers,” she said and stood up. He wanted to reach out and pull her back to ask where Hannibal was, but his arms wouldn’t even twitch. She came back after what felt like an eternity with a glass full of water, a straw, and pills. She helped him lift his head, placed the pills in his mouth and put the straw to his lips. Will tried to swallow but made a big mess instead. Tears were leaking out of his eyes from the pain and frustration. Chiyoh sighed, took the pills out of his mouth and left again. She came back with an injection. It was bliss when the drugs finally started to work.

“Hannibal and Robert were spotted by someone suspicious when they were out preparing our departures,” Chiyoh explained as she moved through the room. She covered him with a blanket a moment later. “I had to take them their documentation and luggage. I apologize for not leaving a message.”

He left me, Will thought.

“I need to check your shoulder wound,” Chiyoh informed him. If he hadn’t been drugged, that warning would have scared him. Fuzzy as his brain was right now though, he let her cut off his shirt and take off the bandage without complaint. She prodded his wound with gloved fingers. The heavy painkillers made Will feel numb and distant from Chiyoh’s touches.

“They look okay,” Chiyoh said sounding relieved. “Please try not to hurt yourself further. I can’t stitch you together as well as Hannibal can.”

That sounded reasonable, Will thought and nodded slowly. Chiyoh cleaned and redressed his wound.

“I can’t carry you,” she said. “Do you think you can walk?”

Will tried to shrug, he wasn't sure. Chiyoh's hand on his hurt shoulder stopped the movement.

"Let's try it," she decided.

A few minutes later, Will was standing. Chiyoh had his uninjured arm over her shoulder and they slowly made their way back through the corridor to the bedroom. As petite as Chiyoh looked, she was strong enough to support his weight. He couldn't help but be reminded of the steel Molly's warmth had been hiding. Under the haze of the painkillers, Will wondered what Chiyoh had done while Hannibal was in prison. He remembered an earlier version of her telling him that Hannibal had asked her to watch over him.

His thoughts were interrupted when they reached the bed. She dropped him, in a mostly controlled way, onto it. Will felt all remaining strength leave him. Chiyoh must have realized he wasn't able to move, because she lifted his legs onto the bed and put a blanket over him. As he fell asleep, Will wondered if it had been cruel or kind of Hannibal to ask for her care after she had just escaped her first prisoner. It was his last thought before exhaustion dragged him under.

It became clear that Will had set back his recovery when he woke up the next time. He was too weak to go to the bathroom on his own and Chiyoh had to help him. Drinking was hard and they had to crush the painkillers for him to be able to swallow them. He dropped in and out of feverish sleep for days. Chiyoh was much more considerate than Hannibal. Whenever he woke, she told him how much time had passed and if she had heard from Hannibal and Robert. She didn't give him details, but they had taken a slower form of transportation than originally planned.

Will started to be awake more often on the fourth day after Hannibal had left, and with a normalized sleep pattern, nightmares came. Mostly it was about waking up in different timelines again and sometimes he lost Hannibal in the sea after the fall. He woke up sweaty and occasionally he screamed for Hannibal in a broken voice. He had ripped a suture on the inside of his mouth on his third night. Chiyoh had to stitch it up again and interrogated him about the nightmares. Feeling defeated he wrote "losing Hannibal" on his notepad. He felt like he should be mocked for the confession, but Chiyoh didn't mock him. Instead she drugged him with his consent for the next night and dropped a phone by the bed the following morning.

"Hannibal's current number is in it," she said in a voice that made it clear they had to be careful. He nodded, feeling incredibly grateful as she added: "He will call in the evening."

The day went by slowly. Will fought the urge to send Hannibal a message. Partially because texting wouldn't feel real enough, but also because he couldn't risk blowing whatever cover Hannibal and Robert were using by luring Hannibal into a conversation at the wrong time. But he checked out the phone's functions while he waited for the phone call.

When the evening came he was antsy and exhausted at the same time. Chiyoh had said he

would call in the evening and wherever currently Hannibal was, that, thankfully, meant early evening. He answered the call before the first ring was finished and put it on speaker.

“Hello Will,” Hannibal said. “Shall we go with one tap on the phone for yes and two for no?”

Will tapped once on the phone.

“That was a yes?”

Will tapped again.

“My apologies for leaving before we could say goodbye.”

Yeah, Will thought.

“We crossed the border a few hours ago and are travelling by car.”

That couldn’t be comfortable for Hannibal, Will thought and frowned in frustration over his inability to speak.

“In a few days we will reach a harbor and continue our journey by ship.”

Will hummed in understanding and tapped once. It was good that Hannibal was out of the country. He just wished he could be with him.

“When you have recovered from your latest setback, you will start your journey with Chiyoh too.”

Yes.

Not that he was looking forward to it, Will thought. He currently felt like shit and couldn’t imagine taking on stressful travel any time soon.

“Chiyoh told me you are having trouble sleeping,” Hannibal continued. Hesitating, Will confirmed.

“My absence is causing your distress?”

Breathing out deeply, Will again tapped once for yes. He really wished he was able to speak.

“Because of what you experienced during the fall?”

Will thought about it. Hannibal meant the time jumps. His dreams were about losing Hannibal. It was likely that losing Hannibal over and over again in the jumps was the cause.

Yes.

“In your… dreams,” Hannibal said and Will knew ‘dreams’ stood for the timelines he had

experienced because Robert might be listening. “Did you kill me, or did I kill you?”

If it wasn’t so painful, Will would have snorted because he imaged Robert was listening to this conversation. If he was in the car with Hannibal he would likely be appalled about the way this conversation was going.

He tapped once, waited for a moment and tapped twice.

“Both?”

Yes.

The limit of their conversation was annoying and too much in Hannibal’s favor. Will opened the message app on the phone to send a text.

“You will have to tell me about that, when you can speak again,” Hannibal mused as Will typed.

-Tell me a story until I’m asleep.-

He heard a beep and some movement, followed by a short, amused sigh.

“Of course,” Hannibal said. “Are you comfortable?”

Will slipped down in bed until he was lying flat. He placed the phone on the pillow beside him and tapped once.

“Once upon a time, there was a monster,” Hannibal began, “he looked like a boy and spoke like a boy, but he was a monster nevertheless. He lived in the woods in a house of stone with his family. One day, tragedy struck and his family died. Alone, he left his home, carrying the dead with him in his heart.”

And one in his belly, Will thought drowsily and with closed eyes. He knew which monster’s story this was and he could clearly see it in his mind. A young Hannibal leaving Lithuania and growing up with his uncle and aunt and her ward, a young girl named Chiyoh. Learning art and medicine and making his way into the world.

“One day he met a man who had been crippled by his peers, his hands were chained and weights where on his feet. The monster decided to free the man from his shackles. He could see a like-minded spirit under the chains and another monster hiding behind startling blue eyes.”

Sleepily, Will felt a ghost of a smile on his lips. *Of course*, he thought sluggishly, of course Hannibal would tell their story like a love story and not the horror it had been. Maybe it was both, a horror and a love story. Hannibal continued up to the point at which Will was incarcerated when he fell asleep. He dreamt of a very lean wendigo watching him from the other side of a river. He called him, but the creature didn’t move.

The next day brought a wheelchair. When Chiyoh rolled it in the room, Will hoped for a very short moment it meant Hannibal had returned. He eyed the wheelchair, annoyed when he realized it was for him.

“We will leave in the coming days,” she said as she saw his look. “And I’m not sure you will be able to walk quickly enough. Will you?”

Sighing inwardly, Will shook his head. He knew he wouldn’t be. They worked on getting him into the chair and how he could sit in it and let Chiyoh move it without hindering her. Afterwards, he was exhausted. She had been right, he wasn’t up to anything strenuous.

In the evening, Hannibal called again. He didn’t tell Will anything new about his journey, but went without a preamble into his story. It felt a bit rushed to Will, like he was working up to something. He didn’t ask him though. He was just happy to have Hannibal’s voice in his ear, telling him about his becoming after the release from the BSHCI. He dreamt of standing in the river, trying to cross it to join the wendigo, but with no success.

“Have you slept better the last two nights?” Hannibal asked on the third evening of phone calls. Will wasn’t sure if the dreams about the wendigo were nicer than the nightmares of losing Hannibal he’d had before, but he had slept through the nights with Hannibal providing a good bedtime story. He tapped the phone once for yes.

“I shall continue then,” Hannibal said, hesitating. Will thought again that something was up with Hannibal and the story. Yesterday he had seemed rushed, now he was hesitant. Will hadn’t thought Hannibal’s time in the BSHCI had been that interesting, but Hannibal was able to speak about it at length anyway. It made Will sleepy, but he fought hard not to sleep, confirming that he was still there whenever Hannibal asked if he was still awake. Hannibal’s story continued with their hunt for the dragon. He was refreshingly open about having been jealous. Will would have smiled if he could have done it without causing himself pain.

Hannibal stopped the story abruptly as they fell from the cliff. The silence pulled Will out of his slumber.

“Are you asleep Will?” Hannibal asked. He didn’t sound right. Will considered his options. Answer and find out what Hannibal was trying to avoid or not to answer and letting Hannibal of the hook. At least for today.

“You currently snore slightly when you are asleep,” Hannibal confessed. “It’s barely audible and most likely caused by the injuries.”

Will closed his eyes, took a deep breath and tapped on the phone to indicate he was awake.

“Do you wish me to continue?” Hannibal asked. Will hated him for putting the decision on him. Hannibal’s hesitation about it was strange. He hadn’t wanted to talk about his time jumps when they were together in person. His approach now was to tell it as a fairy tale.

Will tapped the phone once and then twice. *Yes, no.*

“You are unsure,” Hannibal said.

Yes.

“So am I,” Hannibal mused.

Why?, Will wondered. The silence built between them.

“I thought it would be easier to tell it as a story,” Hannibal confessed. “It’s not. And not knowing your reactions, not seeing your face or hearing your words, makes it harder.”

Will pulled up the phone with his uninjured arm, opened the messenger app and slowly typed a reply.

Then we wait, he wrote. *Until we are together and I can speak again.*

When will that be, btw? He added before Hannibal could answer. Maybe a little to avoid having Hannibal answer his proposal.

“You can try to speak every day if you want to,” Hannibal answered after he read the message. “But as long as it’s painful you should avoid any movements that stress your wounds. I assume eating is still difficult for you?”

Yes.

Chiyoh had brought him soups and soft food in the last days, but swallowing was hard, his portions small and she still hooked him up on IVs. Without them, Will didn’t think he would have any fat left on his body. He hadn’t been as gaunt as he was now when he had been gutted, but of course he had been in a proper hospital then.

“Shall I read something to you?”

Yes.

The next words Hannibal spoke where in French and it startled Will for a moment to hear the language. But as the minutes passed the familiar sounds lulled him slowly under.

The next day, Chiyoh was weirdly busy. She had brought him some puréed fruits with oatmeal for breakfast and hooked him up on an IV. He could hear her walking around in the flat afterwards. As she collected his still half full bowl, he held up his writing pad.

What’s going on?

She stared at the paper, avoiding his eyes and then sat down on the chair beside his bed. He didn’t remember her doing that before. They had kept communication to a bare minimum up

to this moment.

“I have procured tickets for a cruise which will take us to Asia,” she said without preamble.

Will felt a short rush of excitement. They would finally leave and travelling would bring him closer to Hannibal.

“It departs the day after tomorrow,” Chiyoh said and fixed her eyes on him. “I don’t believe the journey to the port will be comfortable for you, though. It’s a six-hour drive.”

The thought of six hours in a car made Will cringe.

“Hannibal suggested I drug you.”

Not a bad idea. At least if it wouldn’t hinder her.

“I believe he also wants you to be able to use your drugged state as a defense if we are apprehended,” Chiyoh said frowning.

What would be more useful for you?, he wrote down and held up the writing pad for her to read. Chiyoh’s eyebrows rose slightly and she looked at his face, searching for something.

“I would prefer to only give you strong painkillers,” she said. “It will be easier if you are still able to move on your own. If necessary you can take a slight sedative for the car drive.”

He nodded. He could do that.

Can I do anything else to help? He wrote.

She shook her head.

“Rest, eat and don’t overstress your injuries again.”

Will suppressed an eyeroll. She wasn’t wrong of course. He had worsened his situation by running around in a panic. But waking up to an empty flat hadn’t been a highlight. It still felt surreal sitting here with her.

When Hannibal called that evening, they didn’t touch the subject of their time jumps at all. Hannibal must have spoken to Chiyoh about their plan, because he subtly tried to make Will reconsider drugging himself. Will ignored it and they continued with the reading of whatever French literature Hannibal was keeping himself entertained with. In the morning he woke with the phone lying on the pillow beside him. The call had long disconnected.

Preparations for their journey took most of the day. Will couldn’t really help, but Chiyoh was in and out of his room. For someone who had fallen over a cliff with just the clothes he was wearing, he had an amazing amount of luggage. Hannibal had probably shopped for him, Will concluded. He wondered what kind of clothes were lurking in the bags. So far, he had

been wearing jogging pants and t-shirts only. Chiyoh didn't change his clothes, but added shoes and a sweater to his ensemble.

The car drive was as horrible as Will had expected. His normal painkillers and the sedative kept him in a manageable state for the first half of the trip. But the three hours after were hell. He went into the stream and avoided Chiyoh's eyes in the rear view mirror. He was a wreck when they arrived at the port and was shaking when Chiyoh heaved him into the wheelchair, but he kept himself sitting up as straight as he could.

He spent the process of checking in and boarding in a daze, which was probably good, because it meant he didn't get nervous when his passport was being checked. Sometime after being wheeled on board the cruise ship by a helpful steward, Will lost consciousness.

Chiyoh shook him awake in the cabin.

"Will!" she urged him.

Exhausted, he focused on her and realized she wanted to move him into a bed. He was crying after they managed it. Will buried the uninjured side of his face into the pillows as Chiyoh moved around.

"Here," Chiyoh said after a while. Not caring about his tears, Will moved his head and saw that she was holding a glass of water and pills. He hoped it was painkillers.

"Shall I put them in your mouth?" she asked and he was grateful for it, because he hadn't been sure how to tell her that he was too weak to manage it alone. He opened his mouth to agree and let her lift up his head to help him drink from the glass.

When he woke up next, it was dark in the cabin and there were small movements that told him the ship was at sea. They had departed and he was incredibly hungry. He must have slept through the day. His limbs were stiff when he moved them, but he was able to sit up and turn on the light on the bedside table. It was probably a tiny cabin by Hannibal's standards, but Will had only travelled in boats so far and found it quite big. It had a bed with a tiny table with a chair beside it. Chiyoh had leaned the folded wheelchair against the chair. The room had two doors. The outside door they had come through and a door which must lead to a bathroom that connected his and Chiyoh's cabin.

Frowning slightly, Will realized that he didn't need the bathroom. Not a good sign when on painkillers. There was a bottle of water, a glass and a Tupperware container with a spoon and his phone on the table. Will filled the glass and started to drink with slow sips. Swallowing was still painful, but his mouth seemed to soak in the liquid. When he was finished, he refilled the glass and pulled the Tupperware closer. Some kind of sweet and fatty yogurt mush with oat flakes was in it. He ate about 3 spoonful before his limit was reached. Exhausted, he looked at the small window in which only the night sky was visible. He had enough of being sick and weak. If he was healthy, it would be so much easier to travel. He laid down to sleep some more.

Will woke up again when it was still dark and the phone was vibrating on the table. He had left the light on and could easily reach for it. Will unlocked it and was disappointed when he realized it was a message from the carrier about the costs of internet access. He put it back on the table and stared at the food. He needed to eat, he knew that, but it was so damn hard. He reminded himself, that he wanted to be healthy and strong again and for that he had to eat.

He finished the yogurt, he drank some water and became aware that while he didn't need to go to the bathroom he could. But he wasn't sure if he could make it on his own and stayed put after some consideration. He dozed until he heard Chiyoh in the bathroom. She came to him when she was finished and helped him to the toilet. There wasn't much conversation between them, but she insisted on them leaving their cabins for breakfast. It would be too conspicuous to stay inside all the time.

They left with Will in the wheelchair, packed in extra clothes, woolen hat and scarf, a big jumper and a blanket over his legs. It seemed a bit much first, but with the little body fat he had right now, he was quickly very happy about the warmth it provided. The restaurant was nearly empty due to the early hour. Will was glad for it, as it meant less people staring at him.

Rude, he thought when he caught people sneaking glances at his face. It sounded a bit like Hannibal.

Chiyoh collected more food for him, some soggy cereals and peaches. She even peeled and cut everything before getting her own breakfast. He tried to eat all of it and received a smile from her that could have come across as condescending, but it didn't bother him. His wariness of her from when she pushed him off the train had slowly given way to gratefulness. She had helped him use the toilet, so it was hard to stay cautious of someone who was prepared to do that for him.

Over the next days, a routine started to form. They went to the restaurant for meals, but avoided the busy times. People sometimes stared at Will with his gaunt look and bandaged face. Decency and etiquette made them look away quickly most of the time though. If Chiyoh wasn't making him eat and if he wasn't sleeping, she was rolling him around the ship. Often, they would end up in a corner of the deck, catching some sun and fresh air.

When Will didn't sleep the whole day away, Chiyoh took him to one of the shops onboard the ship. As he browsed through the collection of books the store offered, he was amused to find "The Blue Beetles of Milton Creek" on the shelves. Taking it in is hands, he remembered his visit to the opera with the Hannibal from the first timeline he had jumped to.

Mrs. Komeda, Will thought as he remembered. Hannibal had liked her.

He started the book immediately after they left the shop. He wanted to reconnect with the feelings he had had in that timeline. It had been like a dream and as hurt and exhausted as he was, he kind of wanted that feeling back, if only for a little while. Because in the end, he didn't want to leave this life and time. They were separated right now, but his Hannibal was in this world and he would see him again soon.

The book was good. Will regretted never having read the signed copy Mrs. Komeda had sent

him because his monograph had helped her write it. He could see where he had influenced her, and the characters were interesting enough to let him overlook any issues he normally had with crime novels. There was a dark underlying humor in the book and Will could see why Hannibal had been fond of her.

He finished the book after two days and wanted to speak with Hannibal about it. Sighing, Will placed it on his lap. They were outside, Chiyoh was standing somewhere behind him, keeping watch as usual.

“Did you finish it?” she asked and he looked, surprised, back at her. While they got along better, she rarely started a conversation about non-practical topics.

Will nodded slowly.

“May I read it?” she asked.

Continuing to be surprised, Will nodded again. He took the book and handed it to her. She placed it in her left side coat pocket. He had mentioned that Hannibal knew the author the previous evening. Maybe she was a little like him and wanted to find out more. He decided to ask her about her intentions at some point.

When they left the restaurant after dinner, which had been more soup for Will, and he really had had enough of soups and mashed food at this point, Chiyoh pointed out that the ship would stop at a harbor the next day.

“We will be able to contact… our family if all works out. They should have arrived in Europe two days ago.”

That was news to Will. He knew the general plan, but hadn’t been privy to details like their travel times. Still, it would be good to get news. And calling them their family made him feel a little closer to her. Will wondered if she had said it on purpose. It was unlikely; she wasn’t as manipulative as Hannibal. Calling Robert and Hannibal their family wasn’t wrong. Hannibal was all that Will had left and Hannibal seemed to consider Chiyoh and Robert his family. For a psychopathic and cannibalistic serial killer, Hannibal had a lot of social connections.

They didn’t leave the ship at the harbor, but Chiyoh used the internet connection to call Hannibal. She couldn’t reach him at first, which made Will nervous. An hour later, he called them back. Chiyoh talked to him first. Will couldn’t hear all the details they discussed, but afterwards she gave him the phone.

“Hello Will,” Hannibal said. Will closed his eyes and savored hearing Hannibal’s voice.

In acknowledgement of him listening Will tapped against the microphone.

“After what Chiyoh told me about your recovery, I believe it’s definitely time that you start training your voice again.”

That was good news, Will thought. He hummed in acknowledgement. He had dozens of questions for Hannibal, but he knew this call was only about hearing his voice. It was sentimental.

“Shall I tell you what your next steps will be?”

Will tapped on the microphone and then he listened.

Knowing he could work on his speech now gave Will new energy to work on his recovery. Hannibal had given him instructions on how to train his voice, and Chiyoh on how to progress with the physical therapy for his shoulder. His days were suddenly filled with exercises and when he wasn’t training he was exhausted and rested. Chiyoh was his taskmaster and he loved and hated her at the same time for pressuring him into working.

Still, as the days went by he started to hear and feel the improvements. He still couldn’t talk but swallowing became easier. The exercises hurt, but day after day movements became smoother. It was nice to gain some independence. He didn’t need Chiyoh for every little thing during the day. He gained strength, and as the cruise went from port to port, Will felt more like himself.

They weren’t in contact with Hannibal and Robert often, but when they were they didn’t speak about important things. Their conversations consisted of French readings and little updates about the progress of their respective journeys. Hannibal and Robert had reached Europe and where again travelling by car. Hannibal wasn’t very forthcoming about his own recovery, but Chiyoh kept Will updated. He assumed she was being kept up to date by Robert. Having Chiyoh and Robert as informants made Will nervous. It felt too much like a family conspiring for the good of one family member. The last time he had had a family with Hannibal, Abigail had died because of his betrayal. Part of Will didn’t want to let anyone be that close to them. Being with Hannibal was dangerous. He felt reasonably safe with him, but he wasn’t sure about Chiyoh and Robert’s safety.

Relearning how to talk was a struggle. Sounds were easy though. He trained syllables in front of the mirror every late afternoon after having taken a nap to recover from the physical therapy. Pronouncing the same syllable over and over again caused Will to flashback to Francis. Sometimes he saw him in the mirror and had to push away everything he knew about the Dragon to not get swallowed up by him. He was frustrated about how little progress he was making. Hannibal urged him to remain patient when they spoke at another stop at a port. At least he was able to mumble yes or no instead of their tapping system. It sped up their conversations enormously.

When the cruise arrived in Asia, Will was able to walk off the ship on his own. Most of their fellow passengers were taking a flight back to the US. Chiyoh and he were boarding a train instead. Will raised an eyebrow at her at the train station and got a rare smile in return. He hoped this meant she wouldn’t throw him off the train they were taking. He didn’t need his wheelchair as much anymore, but Will still stayed in their cabin for most of the trip.

Will realized he didn’t mind the close quarters. He wouldn’t call Chiyoh and him friends, but

she felt close, the same way Molly's cousin had felt close. They shared a loved one.

Travelling by train didn't improve his health. There wasn't enough space for most of his exercises. Also sharing a cabin with Chiyoh made him self-conscious when he was doing his speech exercises. She seemed to understand this, and started to go for walks.

A boat was waiting for them in Shanghai. There was no crew.

"I've never sailed," Chiyoh confessed. They were standing at the pier looking at it.

It's motorized, Will wrote on his phone and held the display so Chiyoh could read it.

"The question is if we can handle it together," Chiyoh said thoughtfully. "Your mobility is still restricted by your injuries. And while I can follow instructions, you can only give them to me in writing."

Will sighed. She was right. She had no experience of sailing. Even the motor wouldn't get them far.

I will train you, he wrote. She frowned as she read it and looked skeptically up at him. He tried to look confident, but he knew how he looked. He was still too thin and standing and walking on his own were tiring him out. He could grunt syllables, but they would need to communicate much faster.

Do you see any other way to Japan? Will wrote.

It was Chiyoh's turn to frown and shake her head.

"Not with the resources and time we have available," she answered slowly and looked back to the ship. "I will have to learn."

Will nodded. They would both have to.

They spent three days restocking the boat whilst Will taught Chiyoh the basics of how to handle it. She was a quick learner, but it became clear very fast that she had no natural talent for it. They decided to use the motor only and not the sails. It would slow them down as they would have to stop and refill the tank, but it was the only halfway safe way they saw. Hannibal made contact before they left, and while he didn't sound happy about the deviation from the plan, it didn't seem to surprise him. After they had discussed the practical issues at hand, Chiyoh left Will alone with the phone.

Will stared silently at it until Hannibal spoke: "We will be out of contact for a while. But you are sleeping better now."

Will sighed deeply as he couldn't tell Hannibal he would miss their conversations.

"I'm looking forward seeing you again," Hannibal said. "Communication will be much easier

in person."

"Yes," Will agreed.

He was eager to see Hannibal in person. He wanted to touch him; needed to. He wanted to find out his secret. Not knowing what Hannibal was holding back was frustrating. Being together in person would make it easier to draw out what had happened to Hannibal during the fall. And it would be easier to tell Hannibal his own story when he could see his reactions. Of course, he needed to be able to speak properly for that. He wanted to be healthy again.

"Have I told you yet," Hannibal said in his deep voice, "how happy I am to hear your voice?"

Will smiled as small as possible to not exaggerate the wound.

"No," he said.

"It is wonderful," Hannibal confirmed. "Is it still painful to speak?"

Will huffed. Of course, it was painful.

"Your… legs?" he asked Hannibal in return.

"Sensation has returned, but I still rely on the wheelchair to move through the world."

Will wondered how Hannibal dealt with that emotionally. Was he depressed, frustrated? It was strange to imagine Hannibal held back by something so mundane as his own body.

"Will it…" He swallowed and flinched at the pain the movement caused.

"I'm optimistic," Hannibal answered the unfinished question.

Will frowned at the phone. He wondered if Hannibal would admit it if he wasn't okay.

"I hope your shoulder will be well enough to help me when we are reunited."

"Yes," Will said tired. It had been a long day.

"I should let you rest," Hannibal offered. Will hummed in agreement. They said their goodbyes. Will stared at the phone long after Hannibal had hung up. He was tired of them being separated.

They shredded their IDs for new ones that had been waiting for them, got rid of the phone and the wheelchair and left the port on the next day. As planned they stayed close to the coast using the motor. Chiyoh did most of the manual work. Will was better than before their cruise, but he was still easily tired and his wounds limited his movements. He was happy to be able to move without the wheelchair and to speak, even if it was very monosyllabic and

painful.

They slowly trudged northwards and stopped at every other harbor to top up on fuel. On a clear day they made the journey into the East. They reached Japan's coast close to where they had planned to land, but were on the last of their fuel when they reached it. Chiyoh had to leave him behind for nearly two days to acquire a car. He waited on the boat and tried not to feel abandoned. He didn't believe that she wouldn't come back, but he was alone in a country whose language he didn't speak, hurt enough not to be able to move independently for long periods of time and while he had a new ID, it wasn't one that would hold up to scrutiny. When Chiyoh returned he was very happy to see her. It seemed to confuse her.

They slept on the boat and cleaned it out the next morning. Chiyoh put their belongings in the car and then they travelled north. Will thought that she would have travelled faster on her own, but his state made her slow down. He was glad for it. Even with the slow pace, the journey was hard on him. His shoulder kept stiffening and they had to stop occasionally so he could stretch out his arms and legs.

At first, Chiyoh was mostly quiet. She turned on the radio and let the silence grow between them, but on the second day on the road she started to drum on the steering wheel with her fingers and her eyes were searching the horizon restlessly.

"What's… wrong?" Will asked.

Chiyoh was silent for a long time. Then, without looking to him, she sat up straighter and answered, "I would have preferred Hannibal and Robert to arrive before us."

Will looked at her questioningly, but she didn't notice. Her whole focus was on the road ahead and whoever was waiting for them.

"Aunt?"

That made her look to him. He knew she wanted to ask him why he had said that. But Chiyoh didn't ask. She knew him well now after weeks of travelling together and looking after him. He didn't think she understood him like Hannibal did, but he didn't seem like a magician to her now and she accepted his ability and didn't question his knowledge.

"Hannibal's aunt, Murasaki. She did not want Robert to help me," she explained slowly. "Robert insisted on helping Hannibal."

"Will she...?" He took a breath. "Is she… dangerous?"

Chiyoh thought about it.

"I do not think so," she said. "While she does not support Robert in this, she would not risk his freedom or the reputation of the family. Still, she is not happy about having Hannibal and you at their home."

"Home," Will said. What a curious word in connection with Hannibal. It made him remember

Lecter Vargas.

“Hannibal has never been there,” Chiyoh added as if reading his thoughts. “He hadn’t actually seen them since they left Paris for Japan and he went to Italy.”

Thirty years, Will thought.

As long as his father had been alive, Will had seen him at least once a year. They hadn’t had the closest relationship, but he had been blood. Deliberately not seeing your family for thirty years seemed unfathomable. Though when he thought about it, Will understood it. Hannibal had known, had already started the path he was on. Not being in contact with them had probably protected them when Hannibal’s… hobby had come out. Nobody had known that Hannibal had living family.

“He protected,” Will said and swallowed before he finished, “them.”

“Possibly,” Chiyoh said. She was gripping the steering wheel tight. “He strongly suggested that Robert should take Murasaki’s given name when they moved and use ‘Robert’ instead of the more unusual ‘Robertus’.”

It wasn’t a bad precaution, Will thought. Thirty years ago, it would have been very rare for a man to take his wife’s name. He couldn’t help but admire Hannibal’s ingenuity a little. Twenty years old and already planning ahead for… well, every eventuality.

“Have you… spoken with her?”

Chiyoh shook her head.

“Robert has.”

Will suppressed a smile.

Mum, I am bringing my cannibal brother home to hide him from the police, wasn’t a discussion Chiyoh had wanted to have. Who would have thought that there was something that rattled her?

They didn’t talk any further. Chiyoh wasn’t less worried, but at least she seemed to be less nervous. They left the main road, drove to a smallish village, left that road again and drove on a small path until they reached an overgrown wooden gate. Chiyoh left the car to open it. They drove onto the property and soon reached a small two-story house. To Will it looked like a very traditional Japanese building. Chiyoh parked the car to the side of it and turned the motor off.

“Please wait.”

Will nodded. She left the car and he watched her go into the house. Then he waited for what seemed like an hour. When she came out she was as tense as she was when she had gone inside. But she opened his car door instead of getting into the car again. Will assumed they

were allowed to stay. The realization was more of a relief than he would have thought. He was tired of travelling.

“You are to stay in the gardener’s cottage,” Chiyoh told him as she helped him out of the car.

That sounds promising, Will thought. Or not, he wasn’t sure.

They walked around the house. Chiyoh watched his every step. Will was glad for it; the stone path was slippery. It took them a few minutes at his slow pace to reach the cottage. It was small. He wondered how Hannibal would like it and if his aunt was passive aggressively telling him to fuck off with the offered accommodation. It would be amusing to see Hannibal’s reaction to this. When they went inside even the pain couldn’t stop Will from smiling. The cottage was basically one big room. There was a bed, which wasn’t wide enough for two and a narrow table with cushions around it. The kitchen was separated from the main room by a half wall and seemed to consist of two cooking plates, a tiny sink and a mini fridge. Beside the opening to the kitchen was a door, which Will assumed led to some kind of bathroom. He sat down on the bed. Chiyoh was looking around with a frown.

“Tell her… thanks,” he said. Chiyoh looked at him, openly confused. Will made a wide sweeping gesture to include the whole room and said: “Like Wolf… Trap.”

Understanding dawned on Chiyoh’s face in the same moment as Will remembered that he did not officially know she knew Wolf Trap. But that didn’t seem to occur to Chiyoh.

“I will get you some necessities before he arrives,” she said.

“To...morrow” he said and she nodded. They both needed rest.

Later, after Chiyoh had brought him his luggage, fresh linens, and something to eat, Will was left alone with his thoughts. With no phone to reach out to Hannibal, and Chiyoh not close by for the first time in weeks, Will felt lonely. His mind provided him with vague but fearful scenarios of what could go wrong. Trying to get a grip of himself, Will ate and then cleaned himself up in the bathroom. The water wasn’t very warm. Still, he felt fresher after the short shower.

Waking up the next morning was disorienting. For a long moment, he just didn’t know where he was. Then he remembered and immediately became nervous. He got dressed, made his bed, and did some stretching. Chiyoh brought him breakfast. While he ate, she made a list of the necessities she had mentioned before. Will, who could live on very little, found it a bit excessive, but he knew Hannibal and didn’t veto anything. She left after breakfast and came back in the afternoon with non-perishable groceries and some basic stuff for the kitchen. Together, they set everything up.

“For the other things,” Chiyoh said, “I will have to go to the closest city.”

Will nodded; they had discussed this before.

“I won’t be back before tomorrow.”

She was hesitating, he found it curious. It was like… she was genuinely worried about him. He wondered if she had transferred her protective feelings for Hannibal onto him.

“I will be,” he paused to give his tongue a rest, “fine.”

“I will get a phone as well,” Chiyoh said with conviction and without looking at him. The decision seemed to help her.

After she left, he pondered if they had somehow become more than reluctant allies during their journey together. He certainly felt closer to her now. Maybe they had some kind of capture bonding going on between them.

With nothing to do but to reread his books, Will decided to check out the cottage a bit more thoroughly. He found lots of little things to repair, but without any tools there was little he could do about it. Chiyoh had brought him cleaning products though. He busied himself with cleaning the bathroom. Weakened as he was, he made very slow progress. He had to take frequent breaks and even laid down for two naps. Still, by the evening he was exhausted and it was easy to fall asleep.

Will woke up in the night. He had dreamt about the ocean water, it had been cold and hard as they hit it. Shivering, he pulled the blanket around his shoulders and went into the small kitchen. He made tea. The way back to his bed seemed too far and he sat down with his teacup on the kitchen floor leaning against the cabinet under the small sink.

“Hurry up… please,” Will murmured falteringly and took a sip from his tea. He mostly meant Hannibal and Robert, but also Chiyoh, he realized. Being alone made him doubt the reality he was in. Any psychiatrist would have a field day with him at the moment. His time travel experiences would probably be interpreted as a psychotic break. Maybe it had been.

He drank more tea. The cottage and the garden around it made different noises to Molly’s house or Wolf Trap. He wondered how Hannibal’s aunt was. With no background on her, it was difficult to predict her state. Maybe she was angry or frightened or a little of both. Will would have liked to meet her and to learn more about Hannibal, but he respected her wish to stay out of it. It proved that she had good survival instincts, like Bedelia. The association made Will frown. He remembered Bedelia from the first timeline he had travelled to. He remembered her dying by his hands.

Hannibal’s aunt was right not to want him in her house. Nothing was proven in this timeline, but he was a killer. He needed to stop seeing himself as someone normal. He wasn’t normal. He had left Hannibal bodies as courtship presents. That was far away from normal. Hiding who he was from society was necessary for survival, but he couldn’t.

“I’m… a killer,” he tried.

He sounded unsure to his own ears. That would need work. Not tonight though.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Will and Chiyoh travelled to Japan and are waiting for Hannibal and Robert.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Please check out the art for this chapter by the wonderful damalisca. <3

With no alarm or phone, and having been awake in the middle of the night, Will woke up late the next morning. The feeling of being disconnected continued. Making breakfast for himself partially grounded him. After eating, he went outside for a moment and stared at the garden. It was all grass, bushes, trees and stones towards the house, but from the cottage to the treeline there were vegetable beds. Spring was approaching. He could see things that needed to be tended to. Weeds that should be pulled and earth that needed loosening. He looked at the house, there was no movement or light in the windows. She didn't want him here, and she wouldn't want his help. He went back inside the cottage. For a moment the room felt like his cell in the BSHCI.

There are windows, Will reminded himself. Windows and doors. He could leave any time. It wouldn't be practical, but the possibility existed.

"Chiyoh," Will said aloud. Today, Chiyoh would return. At least, if everything went according to plan. She would have a phone with her. Maybe they could call Hannibal and Robert. The thought was calming.

Will busied himself with cleaning the kitchen until it was lunchtime. He made some basic vegetable soup for lunch. He would have liked to eat outside, but knew he wouldn't be welcome in the garden. As a compromise, he sat down in the open front door with a blanket over his shoulders and the soup bowl in his hands. When he had finished eating, he couldn't bring himself to move back inside. He placed the bowl on the floor and closed his eyes. The sun was shining on his face. It made him miss their time on the cruise ship.

Will heard a door opening in the distance and he looked to the house. Someone came through the door. He had to fight his curiosity and quickly went back into the cottage. It felt even more confining after the few rays of sun he had just enjoyed.

He had seen her, and he was reasonably sure she had seen him too. Will felt guilty about it. He knew, with a sudden sharp clarity, what she felt and thought. She had believed, hoped, more likely, that they had left Hannibal behind. But then Chiyoh returned like a

foreshadowing. When Hannibal had been arrested, she had hoped again. Chiyoh and Robert's decision to help Hannibal had been against her advice and wishes.

And now Will was here. Murder husbands, the media had called them. In her eyes, Will was a killer just like Hannibal. She didn't want either of them here.

Empathizing with her made Will remember the situation he was in. He had run away with Hannibal, left Molly and the life he had built with her. This here and now wasn't somewhere he had time travelled to. There would be no second chance here, no other timeline he would jump to. At least, he didn't think so. Even if he died and jumped again, Will knew he didn't want to go to another point in time. Right now, his Hannibal was with him in this time. Another time jump could negate that.

He took a nap and must have been more tired than he realised because when he woke up it was near dusk. He heated up the soup and ate another bowl of it.

Chiyoh didn't come back that evening and Will gave up on waiting for her shortly before midnight. He went to bed and slept fitfully. He woke up long before sunrise and tried to stay calm while he prepared breakfast. Not knowing what had happened, and having no plan for how to proceed in such circumstances, made him fret. The only option right now was to wait. But, he decided, he would approach the aunt tomorrow if Chiyoh hadn't come back by then. He wanted to go and check if she had any news right now, but he knew he couldn't. A little delay could mean a lot of things. He shouldn't make a hasty decision.

Time seemed to slow down. Will kept checking the windows of the house. When a knock finally came he was in the kitchen. He didn't even turn off the hot plates before he ran to the door and opened it. Chiyoh was standing outside looking tired. Her hair was in slight disarray.

"I need your help," she said.

"Okay."

He scrambled to put on his shoes and throw on a jacket before he hurried to follow her.

"What… happened?" He asked as they reached the house and made their way around it. But Chiyoh didn't turn and shook her head instead of answering him.

As they arrived at the front of the house, Will saw that two cars were parked in the driveway. Robert was standing beside one of them. As Will's steps sped up he looked at Chiyoh who was smiling smugly. He walked around her and then to the car. Now he could see Hannibal sitting in it.

"Hello Will," Robert said and opened the passenger's door.

"Hi," Will answered. He didn't look at Robert, his focus was on Hannibal. His heart was

beating wildly.

“Hannibal,” he said, carefully pronouncing each syllable.

“Will,” Hannibal greeted. Will couldn’t help smiling, it pulled on the wound and hurt.

“We thought that you could help us get Hannibal to the cottage,” Robert explained, his slight French accent made the words sound melodic.

Will nodded. Chiyoh had joined them, and together they started to unload the car and helped Hannibal out of it. There was a new wheelchair, smaller and more aerodynamic. But even with the more compact chair Will noticed immediately that they wouldn’t be able to maneuver Hannibal down the small path to the cottage in it.

“We… have to… carry you,” Will said and looked from Chiyoh to Robert and then back to Hannibal.

“How’s your shoulder?” Hannibal asked.

Will took a deep breath and then shook his head. He wasn’t really up to that yet.

“Robert and… Chiyoh better… help you.”

It took them a long time. As they walked around the outside of the house, Will could see a shadow in the window watching them. They had to walk slowly on the stones on the path to the cottage. Will walked behind them, carrying a suitcase on his good side. He purposely didn’t turn to check if they were being watched. He had Hannibal here now; Robert and Chiyoh could deal with Murasaki.

They dropped Hannibal on the bed. Will could see that he could barely hold himself up. He put the suitcase down and went to the bed as Robert and Chiyoh left the cottage for the other luggage.

“Want to… lie down?”

“Later,” Hannibal said and looked up at him. “Will you sit down?”

He patted the surface of the bed beside him. Will wanted to put an arm around Hannibal’s waist, but the others would return at any moment. Will yearned for some privacy.

Soon, he promised himself.

Chiyoh came back carrying the small wheelchair. She placed it behind the entrance door and looked them over.

“I believe Robert would appreciate some rest,” she said.

“Will and I will be alright,” Hannibal told her with a small smile.

She left, closing the door behind her. Will slung his hurt arm around Hannibal's waist and the other around his shoulder. Hannibal leaned into the hug and put his forehead against Will's head.

"Hello Will," Hannibal whispered affectionately.

Will had the sudden urge to climb on his lap. Common sense stopped him.

"You should… lie down," he said and loosening his grip on Hannibal.

"I should," Hannibal said and sighed.

Will helped him and lay down beside him. The bed was way too narrow for them both and they were pressed tightly against each other.

"This will not… work long-term," Will said.

"It will do for now," Hannibal answered calmly.

"You like me… close," Will replied smiling slightly.

"Yes."

Will closed his eyes. Just breathing in Hannibal's scent was incredibly calming. Will felt the underlying anxiety he had carried around in the last few weeks flow out of him.

"I missed you," he whispered.

"And I, you."

Hannibal placed his hand on Will's head, stroking over the short hair.

"I will let it… grow," Will promised. "Your legs?"

"Sensation has partially returned. Movement and control are something I have to work on. You can help me with it now."

"Okay."

Before lunch, Chiyoh returned with bags full of food. Unsurprisingly, that got Hannibal out of bed. Will had to get him the wheelchair. Hannibal was frowning from the main room as Will unpacked the groceries and stocked the tiny kitchen.

When Chiyoh returned the next time, she brought boxes of kitchen utensils. Hannibal's frown lessened as they unpacked the boxes and told Will where to place them. Then they got Hannibal to go into the kitchen in his wheelchair, but it wasn't ideal and he could barely turn the chair or reach the upper shelves. They placed everything on the small counter so he could

reach it or left it in a box outside the door in the main room. While they were at it, Chiyoh had brought in a big rectangular bag and cut off the plastic casing. Will realized it was a folding bed. *Good*, he had been worried that he would have to sleep on the floor.

“Do you need… help?” he asked her across the room.

Chiyoh shook her head. She unfolded it and pushed it beside the existing bed. The heights were a bit uneven. That would be fun. When Chiyoh left, Hannibal paused his unpacking to stare at the bed.

“My aunt is insisting on us staying as far away as possible.”

“Yeah,” Will said. He wasn’t sure if Hannibal was inconvenienced or hurt by his aunt’s decision.

“I apologize for the poor accommodation.”

Will laughed and waved Hannibal’s concerns off.

“I like it,” he said. “It’s my… kind of place.”

Hannibal frowned and Will made a gesture around the room as he had with Chiyoh. Hannibal suddenly relaxed and nodded.

“It does remind me a little of Wolf Trap,” he said and looked up to Will. “Please resist adopting any dogs for the time being.”

“I will try,” Will said grinning. It made the healing wound stretch painfully. Hannibal was here. The thought made him happy and impulsively he stepped forward, leaned down and pressed his lips against Hannibal’s. The angle wasn’t ideal and when the kiss ended, Will couldn't help but step back and look at him. Hannibal smiled and suggested they make themselves a meal.

Will watched Hannibal prepare the food while he helped with the chopping. Something was different about the way Hannibal moved. Of course, he was in a different wheelchair, but Will had a feeling there was something else. He couldn’t put a finger on it, though.

“How long… do you think your… recovery will take?” Will asked as they ate. As the table was too low, Will sat with his bowl of food on the new bed and Hannibal was in the wheelchair beside him.

“I have been very lucky so far,” Hannibal explained as he paused eating. “I had lost sensation and the ability to move my legs in the beginning, most likely due to swelling on my spine. As sensation and movement have partially returned, I believe I will be able to walk eventually.”

That sounded vague, Will thought, frowning.

“It is, however, very likely that I won’t have the same degree of control over my movements

or the same range of sensation as I had before."

Hannibal said it without showing any emotion, but Will knew this couldn't be easy. He was always very in control of himself and his surroundings. Will would have liked to comfort him, but it was Hannibal. How did he comfort Hannibal?

"Does that... worry you?"

"It would have," Hannibal said thoughtfully. "But, what I experienced after the fall changed me."

Was it time? Will wondered. Was Hannibal ready to exchange stories now?

"Do you want… to tell me?"

"Maybe…" Hannibal started and then hesitated. "Maybe we could exchange information on what has happened to us?"

"Quid... pro quo?" Will asked.

"Quid pro quo," Hannibal answered with a nod. "Later this evening? When it is unlikely we will be interrupted?"

Will nodded. He wanted to concentrate just on Hannibal when they shared their experiences.

They ate and Will did the dishes. It seemed fair after Hannibal had done the cooking.

"Take a nap?" Will asked when the cooking area was cleaned.

Hannibal nodded in agreement.

"Yes, we travelled through a good part of the night."

Will helped Hannibal out of the chair and onto the bed. As Hannibal arranged himself, he frowned at the fold out bed. If Hannibal wanted to get in and out of the bed by himself, it would be in the way. He pushed the bottom of other bed with his leg until they only touched at the top.

"Thank you," Hannibal said as Will moved the wheelchair to the open space between the two beds.

Will stopped himself from shrugging; his shoulder still hurt when he did that.

"You like being… independent," he said instead. For once the break wasn't to give his mouth a moment of rest, but because he had caught himself before he could say "in control".

"I won't be for some time," Hannibal commented as Will lay down on his own bed. "I will need your help for a long time to come."

“Are you… worried I... will mind that?” Will asked as he pulled the blanket over himself. They were lying across from each other and he liked being able to see Hannibal’s face without turning too much.

“Will you?” Hannibal asked evasively.

What a stupid question, Will thought and rolled his eyes. But then he remembered that this Hannibal didn’t know all that had happened to him.

“I do worry,” he said slowly. “Because it was me... that pushed us... over the cliff… That makes your... injury my fault. Are you angry... because I did that?”

Hannibal was silent and Will wondered if he had fallen asleep with his eyes open. But then he blinked and said: “It’s been a long time since the cliff for me, but I remember feeling your movements, feeling you grip me tight and not stopping you.”

Will swallowed hard, letting the pain ground him. He thought back to the cliff, to Hannibal in his arms.

“You don’t... blame me?” he said.

“No,” Hannibal answered, smiling.

Will felt so relieved. It surprised him; he hadn’t felt guilty on a conscious level. But knowing Hannibal didn’t blame him, wasn’t angry, was one less complication.

“I fell…,” Hannibal suddenly said. He starred in the distance with a faraway expression. “And then I woke up and found myself staring at the Primavera.”

Will remembered. He could see the room and Hannibal sketching. His smile when Will sat down beside him. Will hadn’t been able to stop replying to it in kind. They had been together again. But that couldn’t be it, could it? Will had woken up much further in the past. Maybe Hannibal had come out in his youth, when he had been Il Mostro?

“I looked at the sketch and saw that my hands were bruised. I thought, it might be a memory. It’s one of the strongest memories I have of you and seeing it before the end seemed fitting.”

Hannibal stopped and blinked, his eyes found Will’s, who blushed under his gaze.

“You appeared like a vision. As battered and bruised as I was, but not by my hands. You sat beside me and smiled. You said:”

“Good... to see you,” Will added.

“Yes,” Hannibal said. “But I didn’t answer like I had the last time. I was mesmerized by the look of you, your youth and your unblemished forehead. I reached out to touch it, following the line of the scar I had not given you yet with my thumb.”

The image Hannibal painted with his words stopped Will's breath. Such a gentle gesture after Will had just pushed him over a cliff.

"I must confess," Hannibal continued. "I believed I was dreaming and I did something impulsive."

Will's mind jumped to himself being gutted in the gallery. His pulse sped up as the memory of being gutted in the kitchen, which had happened twice now, rose up.

"I kissed you," Hannibal said and interrupted Will's flashback.

"Oh," he said, feeling a little foolish, and released a shuddering breath.

"How... did I react?" he asked. With the memory of the kitchen fresh in his mind, it was hard to empathise with the person he had been in the gallery.

Hannibal smiled.

"You did not at first," he said. "I became a little forceful and you opened up under me. I must confess that I pressed you onto the bench."

That was… a very good image to banish the memory of bleeding out in the kitchen, Will decided. It was hot. But Will couldn't imagine his past self would have reacted favourably to such an unexpected assault.

"I had forgotten your knife, of course," Hannibal said. He sounded amused.

Fuck, Will thought. He had forgotten it too.

"I bled out under the Primavera. You knelt beside me, starring, shocked at what you had done to me."

Will closed his eyes and sighed. That had been harsh. Unlike Hannibal, he had had time to come to terms with the situation when he first travelled to the past. Hannibal had just been thrown into a precarious moment without any time to acclimatise himself.

He opened his eyes again and reached out for Hannibal's hand.

"I'm sorry," he said.

Hannibal squeezed his hand in acceptance. They were silent, but Will didn't feel the need to say anything.

"I wondered," Hannibal said slowly. "I wondered sometimes, if some of the versions of you I encountered were really you. A you that remembered all of our shared experiences. But you never showed any recognition."

“Neither did any of the… Hannibals I met,” Will said. He pulled up Hannibal’s hand and pressed the back of it against his unhurt cheek.

They didn’t continue their conversation. Will was thinking about the other timelines he had experienced. Hannibal too, seemed deep in thought.

They napped for a while. Will wasn’t sure who fell asleep first, but at some point he woke up drooling on the pillow, having turned on his side to face Hannibal. He closed his mouth and sat up. Hannibal was still sleeping. His face was soft and Will smiled. He tried to get up without waking him, but unlike the last time he had tried to sneak away from a sleeping Hannibal, he didn’t succeed.

“Hey,” Will said sitting up as he saw Hannibal stir.

“Will,” Hannibal answered blinking.

“Sleep a little longer... if you want,” Will suggested and Hannibal gave a small nod.

Will went to the little bathroom. He used the toilet, wondering how Hannibal would navigate it with the wheelchair. Frowning he touched his hurt shoulder. It was still painful and stiff. A lot of movements were difficult and Will knew he hadn’t done his physical therapy as regularly as he should have in the last couple of days. He assumed with Hannibal here, this would change now.

Hannibal was still sleeping when Will came back into the room. He sat down on a pillow on the floor and read a little until a knock on the door got him up and woke Hannibal again.

Will let Chiyoh in. She still looked exhausted but fresher, and was carrying a tray with 2 covered plates on it.

“We made soup,” she said as she came in and placed the tray on the table. Hannibal was working on getting up. Will started to go over to him, but Chiyoh was faster. As she helped him up, Will got spoons from the kitchen. He sat down on the floor beside the table and realized how awkward the height would be for Hannibal. They solved it easily enough by putting the soup on a tray on Hannibal’s lap, but it made Will aware once more of how unsuitable the cottage was for someone in a wheelchair.

“Has Uncle Robert rested?” Hannibal asked Chiyoh as she sat down on the other side of the table.

“He slept a little, but the last weeks haven’t been easy for him.”

“No,” Hannibal said. “They weren’t. I hope he will be able to take it easier now that we are home.”

“I will make sure he does,” Chiyoh told him confidently. “As will Murasaki.”

Hannibal didn't react to the name of his aunt, he just nodded and they started eating. The soup was hot and rich and a little too spicy for Will's taste. He still ate it, happy to be fed something he hadn't thrown together himself and that wasn't as bland as the food of the last couple of weeks.

Afterwards, Chiyoh insisted on doing some stretches with Hannibal and Hannibal insisted Will should do some physio on his shoulder too. They both looked wrecked afterwards. Chiyoh didn't seem affected, but of course she hadn't fallen off a cliff recently.

Will was kind of ready for another nap, but he tried to stay alert as Hannibal and Chiyoh discussed what to do with the boat she and Will had used. They were all for sinking it somewhere inconspicuous. Will disliked the idea, he had liked the boat, even when their passage had been difficult.

They had another small meal after which Chiyoh left and went to bed early. Will was awake long after Hannibal had fallen asleep. When he woke up in the morning, he didn't feel rested. Hannibal, to his surprise, was already up and in the kitchen area. Will looked over his hurt shoulder at him and watched him work. He was still graceful, but a little slower. As he watched, half asleep, Will frowned. Drowsily, he wondered why Hannibal moved his hands and arms so slowly and overly carefully. His upper body should be fine.

"You are awake," Hannibal said without turning to Will.

"How...," Will swallowed, "did you know?"

"You still snore lightly when you lie on your back."

"Oh."

That was a bit embarrassing. Hannibal had mentioned it before when they spoke on the phone.

"I don't think... I ever snored before." Will said as he stood up.

"I found it reassuring when I woke up in the night and heard you."

"Hm…" Will hummed and got dressed.

They ate the same way they had on the day before. Hannibal in the wheelchair and Will on the floor. He would have preferred a western table they could share and a bed big enough for both of them. But Hannibal seemed to want to stick with his family and Will could deal with it.

"Do you want to... talk more?" Will asked when he took the plates and cutlery to wash them.

"Would you tell me of your experience after the fall?" Hannibal asked in return.

“Yeah,” Will said. That was only fair. He wanted to learn more about Hannibal’s jumps, but it was his turn. “Let me finish... this quickly, I want to be... able to see you when I tell… you about it.”

He took Hannibal’s silence as agreement and cleaned and dried before he went back into the main room. After a quick exchange, he sat on Hannibal’s bed, leaned his back against the wall with Hannibal opposite him in the wheelchair.

“It was different... for me,” Will started and rubbed his neck. “For one, I woke up much further... in the past than you... and I also had a lot of time... to realize that I -really- was... in the past. Not that I was sure... that the whole thing was real... in the beginning. A lot of the time... I was wondering if I was having a psychotic... break or something.”

“How much further did you travel?” Hannibal asked as he leaned forward towards Will.

“Months before we... originally... met,” Will answered smiling. “I thought a lot about... what I wanted to do. Should I meet you or run off with the dogs... so Jack could never get his hands on me.”

“Not just Jack, I imagine,” Hannibal noted with an interested smile.

“No, not just Jack,” Will agreed. “But in the end, I decided to stay and to…”

He stopped, feeling suddenly shy about his schemes in the past.

“I wanted to meet you,” he said. His face felt warm. “And I wanted to… be on a more equal footing... as in our shared past.”

He looked up and met Hannibal’s eyes. He was watching Will with great attention.

“I wanted to meet you,” Will repeated. “So, I did a few things to gain... your attention. One was to start killing some mutual acquaintances…”

He went through his actions, his speech getting stronger and less interrupted as he spoke. Hannibal, to Will’s surprise, didn’t interrupt him once, but he was staring at Will like he wanted to eat him up. Making himself desirable in Hannibal’s eyes was why he had schemed and killed in his first timeline. It was a nice perk that this Hannibal also reacted favourably.

Will stopped his story shortly after they met for the first time because there was a knock on the door. Will scrambled off the bed and around Hannibal to open the door.

Robert, carrying some big bags, smiled at him and said: “Hello Will.”

“Hello,” Will greeted him and opened the door further, “please come in.”

“Uncle,” Hannibal said and maneuvered his chair around.

“Hannibal, I brought you some art supplies,” Robert said and patted against the bags that

were hanging over his shoulder. “I thought you might like some.”

“I would,” Hannibal assured him. “That’s very kind of you.”

Robert smiled warmly, but looked away from Hannibal to the floor. Abruptly he looked back up to Will, who had just sat down on the bed.

“Chiyoh wants to go for a walk. She thought you might want to join her, after being stuck here for a few days.”

Will shared a quick look with Hannibal. His face showed subtle signs of amusement and he seemed relaxed about spending more time with his uncle.

“Sure,” Will hurried to say. “Getting some fresh air would be good.”

When Chiyoh came, Robert was sitting on the bed and he and Hannibal were looking through a sketchbook talking in French. Chiyoh watched them with a soft smile as Will put on his shoes and a jacket.

“That was good,” Will said as they walked away from the cottage and the house.

“Hannibal told me they spoke much about art on their journey,” Chiyoh explained, “and that he would like to see Robert’s more recent works.”

The idea of Hannibal bonding with his uncle made Will’s heart hurt a little. He hoped it would go well, but he was worried it would go wrong.

“Where are we going?” he asked.

“There are some woods not far from here. I thought you might like to get to know the trail. It is rarely used by the locals as the land belongs to our property.”

“Could I go... out on my own?”

“Robert sometimes has foreigners as visitors,” she said thoughtfully as they walked through an overgrown field with winter withered plants towards the promised trees.

Good, Will thought, it wouldn’t be too unusual if someone spotted him.

They reached the trees and Will looked up at the still empty branches. Spring was in the air and soon leaves would start to show. It looked like it would be a nice little forest.

“Were you here... while Hannibal was in prison?” Will asked as Chiyoh led him on a small trail.

“For a while,” she said without looking back at him.

The path broadened and Will walked next to Chiyoh. She gave him a quick sideways glance.

“It was good to reconnect,” she stated shortly. “I went back to the US to handle Hannibal’s affairs whenever necessary.”

“He had asked you to look after him,” Will said before he remembered the knowledge came from a different timeline. Chiyoh luckily didn’t pick up on it.

“He never asked you… to break him out?” he asked as they reached a small clearing. They slowed down further as they walked through it.

“He didn’t seem to want that,” Chiyoh said and Will thought that she sounded amused. “It was my impression that he wanted to stay until you released him. As you did.”

“As I did,” Will repeated and sighed.

“He can be very stubborn,” Chiyoh said. “Like his aunt.”

Will wasn’t sure if Chiyoh wanted to talk about the situation, but if she mentioned their aunt, she might. She wasn’t someone who just blabbered about stuff.

“Is there… is there anything we can do... to make it easier for her?”

Hannibal seemed to want to keep the peace, maybe there was a way to help it. Chiyoh didn’t answer immediately. As they walked in silence, Will realized he had said “we” and had meant all four of them, Hannibal, Chiyoh, Robert and himself.

“I don’t believe we can do anything,” Chiyoh conceded. “Murasaki doesn’t wish to come in contact with Hannibal’s… darkness. It scares her and she feels guilty for having not stopped him.”

“And she is worried… about Robert and you?”

Chiyoh stopped and turned to face Will, who had stopped as well.

“She does not worry for me,” she answered frowning, “but she is worried about me.”

“Tainted,“ Will said and Chiyoh visibly flinched. She turned and rushed ahead, not waiting for him.

Tainted because of me, Will thought as he followed without trying to close the gap. Because he had goaded her into killing. Like Hannibal had lured him. He had done what Hannibal did and pulled her into the darkness.

“I’m sorry,” he said aloud. She didn’t react, but her steps slowed a bit.

“Have you finished... the book?” he asked hoping the neutral topic would ease the tension.

“Not yet,” she answered. “But I will soon. The story is well constructed and it is very

amusing."

They talked a bit about the characters and who Chiyoh suspected. She wasn't far off. The trail led them in a curve and soon they left the woods and were on their way back to the house. When they returned and went inside, nearly an hour had passed. Hannibal and Robert where doing Hannibal's physiotherapy.

Hannibal suggested Will join them and Chiyoh went back to the house. Robert showed him the exercises Hannibal had to do and how Will could help with it. Touching Hannibal in such a clinical way wasn't something he was used to, but it felt good to be able to help.

Afterwards, Hannibal offered to make lunch and invited Robert to join them, but he declined. He looked visibly embarrassed when he said his wife expected him. Hannibal waived it off with a small smile.

"Did you have a... good time?" Will asked after Robert had left. Before Hannibal even answered, Will realized how much his question sounded like asking Wally how school had been.

"I enjoy spending time with him," Hannibal replied. "We looked at the sketches for his current project. It looks magnificent. I hope I will have a chance to see it at some point."

He probably wouldn't, Will thought. Robert's workroom was in the house and Murasaki's presence was keeping Hannibal out. Will didn't like it, it seemed unfair, even though he understood her.

They started on lunch. Hannibal mostly directed Will on what to do while explaining the dish as the kitchen was too small for both of them. Will figured that was also Hannibal's way of avoiding a confrontation. Maybe all their cooking when they met had been Hannibal's way of keeping himself from telling Will too much too quickly. After they had eaten, Hannibal reminded Will of his own exercises and Will started stretching.

"You said you had decided to stay in Wolf Trap and Quantico," Hannibal prompted as he watched Will.

"I did," Will answered, slowly moving his arms. "I didn't know what... was happening and thought… it might be a dream or something. But I wanted, I wanted what we had on the cliff. To be as close… to you as in that moment. So, I decided to court you."

"Court me?" Hannibal asked in surprise.

Will took great pleasure in telling Hannibal about his murders as he worked through his exercise regime. He felt Hannibal's eyes on him as he spoke. Will avoided looking back at him most of the time. As he finished his exercises, he had reached the point of the story in which he had met the other timeline's Hannibal. Lacking other places to sit, Will sat down on Hannibal's bed.

"Any comments?" he asked Hannibal.

“It was a good plan,” Hannibal answered smiling. “And I find it comforting that there is a world in which Abigail has been set free. Does it comfort you?”

Will thought back to the timeline he had left behind after his second death. If that world still existed, and he believed it did, then Abigail was free and hopefully happy there.

“Yes,” he said and felt himself smile despite the painful pull on the healing wound. “It’s nice that she... is whole somewhere else.”

“What happened after we met? Did you enthrall my counterpart thoroughly?”

Will’s smile changed to an even more painful smirk as he remembered their dates. He went back to telling his story to Hannibal. It was easier to tell his own Hannibal than the Hannibal from the cliff house. They shared more memories. Still, recounting their dates and sex on the dining room table was weird. He would have glossed over it, but Hannibal asked some pointed questions whenever he tried. Not just when it came to them having sex, though. He also wanted more details when it came to the murders.

Primal instincts, Will thought. As much as Hannibal seemed very refined, the beast was lurking under the layers of etiquette and style.

His narration halted when he came to the discovery that Hannibal had become a suspect thanks to him.

“I must have been very distracted by your charms,” Hannibal commented.

“I don’t think so,” Will disagreed. “I just unintentionally... opened Jacks eyes, or your doors. You had made... it looks so easy in the past we shared. Nobody ever suspected you.”

“I worked very hard for it.”

“Yes,” Will replied. “I got that.”

“What happened next?”

“After that I fucked up even more.”

Hannibal’s eyebrows rose in surprise and disbelief. Will didn’t let him ask anything. He just laid out his mistakes in framing and killing Bedelia. When he reached the part of the story in which Hannibal came to Wolf Trap, Will stopped again.

“I need some water,” he said and got off the bed. He walked around Hannibal without looking at him and went to the sink in the kitchen. Slowly he filled a glass and drank.

“Did I kill you?” Hannibal asked from behind him in the main room.

“Yes,” Will answered.

He couldn't bring himself to turn, but he continued to explain what happened until he reached his death. He stared into the sink for a long time. He could hear the wheelchair move closer to him and then Hannibal placed his hand on Will's lower back. The warmth of it radiated through Will's clothes.

"Do you miss him?" Hannibal asked.

Miss…?

"No," Will hurried to say and turned, grasping for Hannibal's hand.

"I'm sorry I… destroyed what he could have had. But I don't miss him," Will said. He bent down and pulled Hannibal's hand to his lips and kissed them. "I missed you. Wherever I went, I met... incomplete versions of you. I tried... to be happy with them, but I couldn't help but see what... they could become, but wouldn't."

Hannibal smiled, but looked away from Will quickly. It made Will want to claw at him. He wanted to dig out whatever bothered Hannibal about this.

"Would you like to lie down?" Hannibal asked kindly.

"Tell me what's wrong!" Will demanded. "Something... about what I said is bothering you."

Hannibal still didn't look at him, but he squeezed his hand.

"From your story and your words, I realize you made different decisions to me," Hannibal said. "I cannot help but measure my own decisions against yours."

He still wasn't telling him, Will thought and sighed.

"Will you lie down?" Hannibal asked again. "I will tell you what happened after I died in the gallery."

Will heard the pleading in Hannibal's words. He wanted more time. He nodded and they went to their beds. Will lay down on his bed. Hannibal stayed in his wheelchair. He was close enough to the bed to be able to touch Will's hair. He started to draw his fingers through the stubble.

"I became aware again as I was standing in my office in Baltimore. The memory of the smell of my own blood was obliterated by the fragrance of Freddie Lounds' perfume on your skin."

Will froze under Hannibal's fingers. Part of him expected to be dealt some pain for his past betrayal. Surprisingly, Hannibal's movements didn't change. His touch was gentle and soothing.

"I feel like an animal holding still for the slaughter," Will said embarrassed.

Hannibal's touch stilled.

"I'm not going to hurt you, Will."

"But you hurt him."

Hannibal's silence said more than any words. Will sighed.

"I broke his neck and was gone again."

Will felt himself tense up. He had known, of course, he had known. This was Hannibal. But hearing how easily Hannibal had killed the other Will was frightening.

"I said to one of the other Hannibals,... I said that he had to stop... hurting me, because at some point I… would not be able to get up again."

"You are worried I won't be able to stop hurting you?" Hannibal asked.

Will made himself relax as much as he could while still being ready to bolt.

"Yes."

Hannibal let out a deep breath and resumed his caress of Will's hair.

"I know right now it is hard to believe, hard to trust," Hannibal said. "But I want you whole and undamaged and in my life for as long as possible."

And what Hannibal wanted, he would ensure he achieved, Will thought.

"I became aware again sitting in the Bentley," Hannibal suddenly continued. "It was parked in front of my house in Baltimore. I had the keys in my hand. As if I had just pulled them from the keyhole. After the two time jumps I had just experienced, I was understandably confused about the situation. As you had done the first time you had woken up in another time, I checked my phone. The date, together with the status of my conversations on the phone log, made me realize when I was."

Hannibal was staring into nothing while he continued gently stroking Will's stubbly hair.

"It was the day you had been released from the Baltimore State Hospital of the Criminal Insane. I remembered," Hannibal continued smiling, "you were waiting inside with a gun. Unlike you, I didn't think I was hallucinating or imagining what was happening. Still, the idea of time travel was far from my realm of possibilities, I didn't dare to believe."

Will couldn't help but feel a bit disgruntled about Hannibal's quick understanding of what was happening. It had taken him hours, but of course self-doubt wasn't helpful in an unbelievable situation.

"Were you excited?"

Hannibal tilted his head to look to Will.

“Exhilarated is the word I would use,” he answered. “I had prepared an escape from the cliff house, but then you pulled us off the cliff. Being in the past, with the knowledge I had of the future; it was a rush.”

“You went inside,” Will guessed. He could see Hannibal walk in. Cocky from the power he had just discovered and eager to confront Will. And that Will, he would have seen the arrogance.

“Did I shoot you?”

Hannibal laughed.

“I tried to be demure and to make you doubt yourself as I had before,” Hannibal explained amused. “But I must not have been believable.”

Blood on the kitchen floor, Will thought and closed his eyes.

“Fuck,” he whispered. A thought occurred to him. “Once I killed you and... once you killed me. You ended up further in the past... both times?”

“Yes,” Hannibal answered with a questioning voice.

“That doesn’t fit the pattern I found.”

“Pattern?”

“Whenever I was killed or... you died, but not by my hand, I moved forward. If I killed... you or myself I moved backwards.”

Hannibal’s caress stopped and Will saw him look in the distance.

“There was no such pattern for me,” Hannibal declared and resumed his petting of Will’s hair. “I always moved backwards.”

“Oh,” Will remarked. He hadn’t expected that. Part of him had always thought Hannibal’s experience had been like his.

“Shall we think about this before we continue?” Hannibal asked.

“Yes,” Will agreed without hesitation. “Yes, a break, please.”

“Your hair is very uneven now that the shaved patches are growing back,” Hannibal noted changing the topic.

“Want to cut it again?”

“I would like to, maybe tomorrow?”

“Yeah,” Will said and closed his eyes. He dozed for a while and only got off the bed when dinnertime arrived. They cooked together, and Will wished for a bigger kitchen and a proper house. Watching Hannibal struggle with the wheelchair in the small cottage wasn’t a good sight. He hoped having Robert and Chiyoh close by was a big enough comfort for Hannibal to make up for the inconveniences.

Hannibal made them do another round of physio. Will was fine helping Hannibal with his, and it was nice to feel Hannibal move his legs, but he hated his own exercises. His shoulder kept locking up and Hannibal made him do some extra light stretching again and again until he could do the harder stuff. It frustrated him and he went to take a shower in a huff afterwards. As he undressed in the tiny bathroom, he thought that Hannibal might like to clean up too. A bit ashamed and only in his boxers, he peeked out of the small door.

“Hey, do you want to take a shower or wash up?”

Hannibal turned the chair in his direction and tilted his head to the side.

“If you would help me take a shower I would appreciate it, Will.”

Feeling guilty about his previous impatience, Will nodded.

They discussed the logistics and undressed in the main room. Will was glad for all the sex and nakedness he had shared with the Hannibals of the other timelines. He was relatively calm about being naked with Hannibal now thanks to it.

Compared to the last time he had showered with Hannibal, it wasn’t very sexy. Most of the time he had to hold Hannibal up or keep him balanced as he leaned against the wall. They cleaned up quickly and Will maneuvered a wet Hannibal into the wheelchair and helped him to get dry. His shoulder complained about the stress when they were done.

He dreamt of holding Hannibal up and fucking him that night. He woke up aroused and without blankets. Hannibal was stroking his cock through the fabric of his boxers with two fingers.

Will moaned and said “Don’t.” with a voice rough from sleep.

Hannibal’s fingers stopped.

“You were making delicious noises in your sleep.”

Will was torn between arching up against Hannibal’s hand and going to the toilet. The need to go to the bathroom won out. He took Hannibal’s hand and kissed the knuckles as he stood up.

“Sorry, I need to…,” he made a vague gesture towards the bathroom door.

When he came back, Hannibal had sat up and was lifting his legs out of bed. It made Will regret having left. Getting some body contact would have been nice. Some of this thought must have shown on his face. Hannibal patted the mattress beside him. Will joined him and climbed over his bed into Hannibal’s. He curled up on the bed while draping his arms and upper body over Hannibal’s lap.

“Your experiences with my alternative selves have made you more open,” Hannibal noted.

“I think running away with you and killing Francis... had more to do with that.”

Hannibal’s arms enclosed Will. He remembered Robert mentioning that Hannibal liked curls. It was like Will could feel him hesitating when he touched him.

“What’s the plan for today?”

“Unfortunately,” Hannibal said and sighed, “our days will not have much variety in the coming weeks. Our main focus has to be to get healthy. So, physiotherapy and training and good food is what we have to indulge in.”

“And after?” Will asked.

“After we have recovered?”

Will nodded.

“What would you like to do, Will?”

“When I thought about running away with you, I imagined... more pricey hotels and expensive cars and clothes... than what we have right now.”

“Am I disappointing you?” Hannibal asked and Will could hear the smile in his voice.

“It’s actually more interesting than what I imagined.”

“I assume neither of us predicted the time travel.”

“Yeah,” Will agreed. “But I’m currently more surprised by... you having living family. Chiyoh told me you cut ties when you went on your… path. It’s kind of scary to think you knew... what you were, what you could become, at that age.”

“It seemed prudent to protect my family.”

“Will you miss them? When we leave?” Will asked. “We will leave them at some point, won’t we?”

“I will miss them,” Hannibal answered.

They didn’t talk after that conversation. Will stayed curled up until Hannibal had to go to the bathroom. Afterwards they got dressed, cleaned up, made breakfast, and ate it together. When Chiyoh came and helped Hannibal with his exercises, as on the day before, Will went for a walk in the woods. Without company he could choose his own pace and took a leisurely stroll. He couldn’t help but miss his dogs as he walked on his own. He hoped they were okay. He hoped Molly and Wally were okay too. He wasn’t sure if he wanted to know how everyone else was. Maybe Zeller and Price, but not Jack and he was uncertain about Alana and Margot too.

The thought of Alana made Will slow down. She had found Hannibal once in Florence and she had the whole Verger fortune behind her if she wanted to hunt them down now. He had the sudden urge to look her up, but the cottage didn’t have internet. Maybe he could ask Chiyoh to look into it. Hannibal had probably already done that. Still, it wouldn’t hurt to be proactive.

Chiyoh was gone when Will came back and without anything else to do, Will asked if he should continue with what had happened after his first time jump. They went to the beds and Will sat down on Hannibal’s as he had the day before and Hannibal stayed in the chair. Will didn’t like it, he would have preferred Hannibal to be more comfortable.

“I ended up in your dining room, with Abel... and you watching me having a seizure,” Will began. He hadn’t stayed in the second timeline very long, and Hannibal had told him about 2 jumps yesterday. It seemed only fair to continue after the other Hannibal’s untimely death by Will’s gun.

“I shot you. I saw you bleeding out, told you... I was sorry and then I fell,” Will said and remembered the pain of breaking his shoulder. “I had sleep walked onto my roof once... when I had encephalitis. The jump had brought me to that moment. I just didn’t wake up and turn around that time, and I fell... off the roof and broke my shoulder.”

The memory made him angry and he couldn’t help but stare at Hannibal with a frown.

“You really played with my life when we first met,” he accused Hannibal.

“Yes,” Hannibal agreed calmly. “I tried to dismiss the feelings you caused.”

You don’t say, Will thought, but didn’t complain aloud. He didn’t want to get into an argument. Instead he continued to tell Hannibal about his time in the hospital. Hannibal seemed highly amused by Will hallucinating a version of him that remembered the cliff, but didn’t interrupt. His smile faded when Will told him how he had died from the encephalitis.

Will considered whether he should place his finger in the wound and repeat that Hannibal had played with his life, but in the end he decided against it. Antagonizing Hannibal wasn’t the goal here. They wanted to exchange experiences.

“I think it’s your turn now.”

Hannibal seemingly collected himself for a moment. He crossed his fingers in his lap before he began to speak.

“I died in my kitchen, shot by your hand,” he said. “And then I was standing on a bucket, the smell of chlorine and blood mixed in the air. Matthew Brown was watching me and my blood was slowly dripping to the ground.”

No, Will thought, feeling cold and closed his eyes.

“I saw Jack coming into my sight. The first time I had experienced the moment, I had called out to Jack about Mr. Brown's gun. I didn’t the second time. I’m unsure if it was a decision or an oversight on my part. Bleeding out is a slow death, but I had a dying Jack and later also Alana to keep me company.”

Stunned, Will stared at Hannibal.

“You couldn’t save yourself?”

“No, without Jack, no help arrived in time. At least for me and Jack. Alana was still alive when I lost consciousness. When I opened my eyes again, I was in another time.”

So close, Will thought in amazement. He had been so close to getting his revenge. How was that Will doing now? Was he free, or still in the BSHCI? He pushed the thought away. Wondering about the other timelines wasn’t healthy for him. Hannibal, it seemed, hadn’t been much luckier than him with the jumps.

“Whatever caused our time jumps didn’t like us very much,” Will decided.

“Are you placing the cause of what happened into the hand of a higher power?”

Will shrugged. He hadn’t really thought about it.

“All the numerous moments... of our lives and you ended up at pretty... dangerous ones. As did I.”

“One could argue that life is dangerous and maybe we just underestimate how easily our lives could have ended at any moment.”

That was a philosophical way of looking at it, but Hannibal might be right. Will nodded.

“Should I continue with... my next jump?” Will asked.

“Are you hungry?” Hannibal asked back.

“I could eat.”

“Then let us continue after lunch,” Hannibal suggested.

Will got up and they went to the kitchen. They had only just started to prepare some food when there was a knock on the door. Will went to open it and found Robert outside. He was carrying at least two sketchbooks under his arm.

“Hello,” Will said and let him in. “We were just making lunch.”

“Hello Will,” Robert greeted him back and looked at Hannibal from the kitchen door.

“Uncle,” Hannibal said looking up from the chopping board on his lap. “Would you like to join us?”

“If it’s no bother,” Robert said hopefully. “Can I help?”

“I would appreciate it,” Hannibal assured him, smiling. He looked genuinely happy to see him. Will felt himself reflect on the feeling and left the two of them working after taking Robert’s sketchbooks. There wasn’t really enough space for two people there.

“May I look through them?”, he asked Robert as he walked towards the beds.

“It’s not my place to say,” Robert answered with a hint of French in his voice. He glanced to Hannibal. Will followed the look.

“May I?”

Hannibal tilted his head.

“Of course you may, Will.”

The two men talked and Will leafed through the first sketchbook. He was featured a lot and often he wasn’t completely clothed. He felt himself blush as he looked at some of the sketches. He didn’t mind Hannibal drawing him like that, but Robert had seen them. Will squirmed as he found a drawing of himself buck naked but thankfully lying on his chest. Only his butt was visible.

To his relief the second sketchbook wasn’t about him. Chiyoh was in it, and Robert, both at different ages and at first young, then later elderly Japanese woman, who must be Murasaki. Will stopped when he encountered the picture of an unknown woman with bright hair, an innocent smile and features that reminded him strongly of Hannibal. He thought she might be his mother. She had died when Hannibal had been very young. Maybe this was how Hannibal remembered her. He would ask Hannibal later. He found some European looking houses on the following pages, rooms full with art and music instruments, and, weirdly, a lot of mangy looking cats. Had they had cats when Hannibal had been younger? There wasn’t any sign of a cat in the garden.

Will hesitated when he encountered another picture of the woman from before on the last

page of the sketch book. She was a girl here, still in puberty judging by the state of her skin, but also clearly the same person. Will went back to the first drawing and then to the second. Hannibal couldn't have drawn his mother in puberty and in the first drawing she was somewhere around 40 at least.

Something was nagging at him in the back of his mind as he stared at the young girl and then the woman. There was something there, something important.

I will never kill you again, Will, Hannibal had said when they were recuperating in the flat after the fall.

I always moved backwards.

How far back?, Will suddenly wondered and touched the face of the woman. He looked up and watched Robert and Hannibal move. They were so similar, but the feeling of similarity didn't just come from the shared features, they moved in the same fashion, careful and well thought out. Hannibal had always controlled his movements, they had been part of the mask he showed the world. But he was slower now, careful how he moved. Will had thought it came from the injuries, but maybe it didn't.

I will never kill you again, Will, he heard Hannibal say again. *I always moved backwards.*

Dread solidified in Will's stomach.

"Mischa," he whispered staring at her picture.

Abruptly, he stood up. The sketchbook fell out of his hand. Robert turned and Hannibal looked over his shoulder at Will. Whatever Will's face showed from his inner turmoil, it made Hannibal abandon what he was doing.

"Will?"

"How often…?" Will began and shakily drew a breath, "did you have to…", *kill me*, "before you reached her?"

Chapter End Notes

Sorry, not sorry? *runs off to hide*

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

> Will just found out what Hannibal did while time travelling. To say he was shocked would be an understatement.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Please check out the art for this chapter by the astonishing Rivaqah. <3

Hannibal's face was all the answer Will needed. He felt like he had been gutted again. His mind was reeling as he started to put the pieces together. Hannibal stared at him with growing worry and Robert seemed confused.

He had been with Robert, Will's mind whispered. He had been with Mischa and his family instead of with Will. Most likely he had murdered Will many, many times to get far enough into the past to save Mischa. Will balled his fists as rage and jealousy boiled up inside him. He needed to get away from them before he went for Robert's throat.

He stumbled towards the door, having enough foresight to grab his shoes and jacket. He left without putting them on though as he heard Robert say "Will? What's wrong?". The door shut behind him. If Hannibal said something, he didn't hear it.

On socked feet, he walked over the cold, but thankfully dry stones, into the woods. As he reached the edge of the garden, Will stopped and put on his shoes and jacket. He hugged himself and rubbed his arms to warm up. The cold air was cooling the rage, but his mind was still reeling. He walked quickly until he reached the trees. Only when they were all around him did he slow down.

"Fuck!" Will shouted, embracing the pain it caused his cheek, and kicked the earth. He pressed his fists against his eyes and kneeled down, trying to keep the anger in. He wanted to kill something. No, not something, someone, more than one. He wanted to go back, walk through the garden to the house he wasn't allowed in and kill everyone in it. Hannibal had brought them here to be with his family, after having spent decades with them. It made Will angry, because Hannibal was his.

Will snarled and let his hands drop to the ground.

How dare the fucker want his family after he had ensured Will couldn't have one? Not once,

but three times Hannibal had destroyed Will's prospect for a family. Will shouted again, wordless in his anger. He hit the ground with his fists and revelled in the pain he caused himself. It didn't even matter that he was doing it to himself, as long as he caused pain. He repeated the action again and again. Slowly his rage left him until he collapsed exhausted on the ground. He rolled onto his side and hugged his knees with his arms, trying to hold his emotions in. He was shaking, but his mind was blessedly blank.

The cold licked over his skin and made him feel sweaty and clammy. Will didn't know if he was quivering from bodily exhaustion or the low temperature. Logically, he knew he should get up. Shock and lying on the cold ground wasn't a good combination. Emotionally, he just wanted to bury himself in the earth and forget where and when he was. But he didn't want to die. Death wasn't an option anymore.

For a crazy moment, Will thought about leaving. He could probably hike to the next settlement. He had no money, but he could steal transportation and whatever else he needed. He had killed, theft was a minor crime compared to murder. But he would be leaving Hannibal behind and he didn't want to abandon him. He wanted to hurt him and kill everyone between them, but he didn't want to be without him.

Will let go of his legs, turned onto his back and wiped his hand over his face. He didn't want to leave Hannibal, that was good. Wanting to kill Hannibal's family on the other hand wasn't great. He had given up everything for Hannibal, but Hannibal had given up on Will.

For Mischa, Will thought and remembered the child's grave and the bloody handprint on the fountain. She had lived, and Hannibal had watched her grow up. Will wondered if he had been happy, and if he had given up killing for her.

He stared up at the sky through the empty branches of the trees around him. Greyish clouds were slowly moving over the steel blue sky. He was cold and he still felt murderous. He got up, painfully aware that his hurt shoulder didn't like the low temperature. As he walked out of the woods and over the grass to the garden, he felt dread pool in his stomach. He didn't know what would happen now. The last weeks, he had felt safe. Apart from having to flee the country, healing and exchanging stories, everything had seemed to move in the right direction because Hannibal was beside him. Now he felt he had been thrown into unknown waters.

Will stopped at the edge of the garden, starring in the direction of the cottage. He could barely make out one of the walls.

This is your decision, Will told himself. *You can go to him or you can leave.*

Right now, Hannibal couldn't even follow him. Maybe he wouldn't even want to follow him. He might prefer to stay with his family and work his way into their lives. If anyone could manage that in spite of serial killing and murder, it would be Hannibal. But he had said he was happy to have Will back.

Fighting with himself at every step, Will walked through the garden and stopped at the door. He felt like he should knock and it made him angry. He wasn't a guest, he told himself. They were a package deal. If Hannibal didn't understand that, he would have to make him

understand.

He opened the door without knocking and found Hannibal waiting inside. As Will came in, Hannibal looked up. His expression was strangely vulnerable, a mix of relief, happiness, and guilt. Will closed the door behind him.

“I made tea with honey,” Hannibal said carefully. “I thought you might want to warm up.”

Drinking something hot sounded like a good idea. He was cold and exhausted after the emotional ups and downs.

“Yes, please,” Will said and opened his jacket. Hannibal wheeled himself into the kitchen. Will soaked in the warmth of the cottage and took off his jacket and shoes. He didn’t feel like he had the energy to hash things out with Hannibal right now. He looked at Hannibal and saw him place a teacup and teapot in his lap while sitting in the wheelchair. Without thinking Will went to him.

“Let me take that,” he said and carried everything to the table in the main room, leaving Hannibal in the kitchen.

“Did you finish cooking dinner?” Will asked as he placed the pot and cup on the table.

“No,” Hannibal answered from the kitchen. “Robert left shortly after you. I asked him to let us be.”

Will nodded without turning. He didn’t feel ready to talk, but not speaking about the elephant in the room wasn’t feasible either. He sat down on the floor, facing Hannibal.

“Can you make something? Maybe just some sandwiches?”

“Of course,” Hannibal agreed.

Will filled his cup and took a sip. The tea was fruity and there was a lot of honey in it. The warmth it brought Will made him relax slightly. He watched Hannibal move as he sipped his tea. Again, he saw the slowness he hadn’t been able to place before.

“How old were you when you… before you went back to the fall?” he asked.

He had expected Hannibal to turn, but instead he stayed with his back to Will when he answered.

“Around my uncle’s age.”

Will thought about it for a moment. It meant Hannibal had moved about 40 years into the past to the moment Mischa died and then lived forward for 50 to 60 years? Decades without him. As he sat the cup down, his hands were shaking.

“So, you know what will happen in the world for the next years?”, he asked. It was a simple

question.

“If no big changes occur due to our presence, yes.”

Countries to bypass, Will thought nodding. He knew he concentrated on this to avoid speaking about the deeper issues.

“Did you..,” Will stopped, unsure what he had wanted to say. “Were you happy?”

Hannibal’s movements stopped. Will wished he could see his face. Even a miniscule facial expression would have given him a bigger clue than Hannibal’s back.

“I was content,” Hannibal confessed. “And there was happiness.”

Will heard the “but” that Hannibal didn’t voice. He waited for him to finish the sandwiches and picked up his tea again. When Hannibal came over, he had a plate on his lap with another plate on top of it.

Clever, Will thought and watched Hannibal as he came closer.

“But?” he pointed out when Hannibal arrived at the table and put the plate on it.

“But I was not as happy as I had been in my first life.”

Will couldn’t help but feel a certain amount of relief at those words. If they were true and not just a lip-service. Time, he needed to give this time.

“I had to hide my true self and it was tiring,” Hannibal said with his eyes on the ground.

“And still we are here with your family,” Will accused. His rage still burned inside of him.

“Chiyoh suggested it when we were recuperating,” Hannibal said looking up. “I couldn’t find it in me to reject her suggestion.”

Will could understand that; he empathised with Hannibal in this. He lifted the upper plate up and stared at the sandwiches. He couldn’t remember having ever eaten sandwiches with Hannibal. It was so much not a meal he would expect Hannibal to make. Like this cottage, it wasn’t something that fitted Hannibal. Will hadn’t minded it so far, being here and having Hannibal’s family around. Now it felt wrong. Will turned the upper plate and placed one sandwich on it before he pushed the bottom plate with Hannibal’s share to the other side of the table.

“They're not my family, Hannibal,” Will said looking up. For a moment, he thought he saw the glass that had once divided them between their faces. “And they are not yours either,” he added, feeling cruel. “They are not the ones you left behind when you or I died in that other timeline.”

Hannibal didn’t meet his eyes. He was focussed on the plate in front of him. Will wanted to

shake him until he…. Will wasn't sure what he wanted. For Hannibal to wake up and be who he had been before maybe. That wouldn't happen. Will knew he was changed from his time jumps. It wasn't fair to expect Hannibal to have stayed the same. But he had yearned so much to have his Hannibal back, he couldn't help being disappointed and angry.

"I thought about going to the house," Will said, watching Hannibal's reaction. "And killing them, so I could have you to myself."

Hannibal's head abruptly went up, and for the first time since the fall, Will thought he looked awake and sharp.

"Don't." he ordered Will.

Unimpressed, Will placed his hands flat on the floor behind him and leaned backwards.

"You couldn't stop me," Will told him, challengingly. "You choose a hideout in which you are stuck. I could leave the cottage and you... wouldn't be able to follow me. The paths in the garden are impossible with a wheelchair on your own. I could just go and kill them all."

Hannibal looked at him threateningly, his hands were gripping the armrests of the wheelchair tight. It looked like he wanted to jump out of the chair and strangle Will, but he couldn't. Will felt a little thrill at the power he had right now. He wanted Hannibal to be strong and murderous, but having the upper hand was nice too. Compared to the stuff Hannibal had pulled on him, it wasn't too bad, yet Will felt like an asshole. Especially as he had caused Hannibal's injury by throwing them off the cliff.

"Is it good for you to be here?" he asked frowning. "Could you heal better or faster if we went somewhere else?"

Hannibal's face smoothened as he calmed himself.

"Professional medical care could speed up my recovery," Hannibal admitted.

Will sighed.

"Let's eat," he said and reached for his sandwich.

"You will not push this?" Hannibal asked leaning towards Will. "And insist we leave?"

He wanted to, Will realized as Hannibal spoke. He wanted to get Hannibal somewhere else where it was only the two of them. He wanted, he yearned for…

Will took a deep breath and put the sandwich back on the plate.

"I want you to be able to get around by yourself, because I like you strong... and independent," he said. "I want to sleep in a bed with you, with luxurious soft sheets and in silk pyjamas. I want you to have a kitchen where you can reach everything, and I want... to be able to go and buy you all the fancy food stuff you want until you can go by yourself. And

when you are fit again, I want us to go and hunt together. Basically, I want you, us, to be happy."

He stopped and tried to figure out what Hannibal was feeling, but his face was closed to him.

"Would that still make you happy?" Will asked uncertain.

"I don't know," Hannibal said slowly, like he was just figuring it out himself. "I'm very happy to be with you. Happier than I have been for a long time."

"Are you happy to be with them?" Will asked and nodded in the direction of the house.

"Sometimes it pleases me to see my uncle or Chiyoh alive and well," Hannibal said looking to the distance. "And then there are times when they are absolutely insubstantial, like the memory of a dream."

"Do you feel that way about me too?"

"No," Hannibal shook his head forcefully, "You always feel real, even if I sometimes doubt you are really here."

Will couldn't quite grasp it, but had a hunch he wanted to confirm.

"You didn't seek me out, in that other life?"

"No," Hannibal answered looking into Will's eyes. "I thought of you often, but for Mischa's sake, I buried everything that was destructive as deep as I could. Had I met you, you would have woken too much of what I needed to bury."

Will pulled his legs up and placed his elbows on his knees. This wasn't what he had wanted or hoped for. He felt betrayed, but also like he had no right to feel that way. Just because he had gone to find Hannibal didn't mean Hannibal was obligated to do the same. And he hadn't even thought about his own childhood when he had time travelled. Now that Hannibal had brought it up, Will felt a vague yearning for his parents. The idea was alluring, but, ultimately, he couldn't imagine really going for it. On the other hand, he didn't have any cannibalized siblings in his past that he could save and see grow up. He remembered the pictures and didn't have to ask if it had been worth it.

"Was she still alive when you… left?" Will asked. "Mischa, I mean."

"Yes," Hannibal answered.

Will thought about it for a moment.

"I had this notion, actually one of your counterparts suggested it, that all alternative timelines I experienced where as real as my own."

"I had similar thoughts," Hannibal said nodding.

“If it’s true, and I believe so, she is still alive in that world.”

Will looked up smiling slightly and Hannibal smiled back melancholically.

“It is a comforting belief.”

Silently, they stared at the table where the two plates with a sandwich on each still stood. Will didn’t feel like eating but they had just dished out a lot emotionally and he was ready to chew on something. He picked his sandwich up and nodded at Hannibal’s.

They ate, slowly and not with much appetite. They looked at each other from time to time as if they were checking if the other was still there. Will finished first, he always ate faster than Hannibal. He drank his tea while Hannibal was still eating.

“Are you still cold?” Hannibal asked when his plate was empty.

“A little,” Will answered.

“Maybe a shower would help?”

It was a good idea and Will went into the bathroom while Hannibal cleaned up. Their warm water supply wasn’t enough for a long shower, but even a short one warmed him up better than just the tea. When he came out, he was ready to sleep. It wasn’t that late, but Hannibal didn’t disagree. Lying in the bed beside Hannibal’s felt far too distant to Will. After staring at the ceiling for what felt like an hour, Will sighed and turned to Hannibal.

“Are you still awake?”

“Yes.”

Will got up. He pulled his blanket with him.

“Make some room?” he requested and didn’t wait for Hannibal’s reaction, he just got into the too small bed.

They had to rearrange each other a few times until they found a mostly comfortable position. Will was lying half on top of Hannibal who had an arm around his waist to steady him. Both blankets were draped over them, and Will knew he would get too warm soon. He didn’t care. He needed to hold on to Hannibal right now.

As expected Will woke up overheated during the night. Hannibal’s breathing was slow and regularly hit his ear. Carefully, Will moved until part of the blanket covering him fell away. Hannibal continued to sleep.

Too trusting, Will thought sleepily. Hannibal should have woken up when Will’s breathing changed. Never mind him moving around. Will pondered over it as he drifted back off to

sleep. It was like Hannibal was tamed. He wasn't sure if he liked it.

Morning came and Will woke up to the sound of humming. He blinked and searched for the origin of the sound. It was Hannibal who was lying under him.

"What are you humming?" Will asked.

"A Lithuanian song," Hannibal explained with a miniscule smile.

Will felt jealousy rush over him. He let it go as best as he could. He was the calm and only slightly crazy one in this relationship.

"I have thought about your wishes," Hannibal began.

"Oh?"

"You are right," he continued as Will listened. "Our current accommodation is not up to standard."

"Okay," Will agreed, wondering where this was going.

"And trying to hold onto the timeline I lived isn't healthy."

No kidding, Will thought.

"So, what do we do?" Will asked curious.

He waited for a reply, but Hannibal didn't answer immediately. Frowning, Will looked up. He couldn't decide, Will realized. Hannibal understood, but he couldn't let go. He had never been good at letting go.

"Let's get up, okay?" Will sighed.

They started the day with stretching and exercises as they were both stiff from spending the night in the same bed. His body felt wrecked. Nevertheless, Will felt clearer than the day before. Before lunchtime Chiyoh came over and brought groceries. Will left her with Hannibal and went for another walk in the woods.

When he came back, she was still there. She was working on a laptop with Hannibal beside her, looking over her shoulder. He wondered how that worked. There was no Wifi available in the cottage. The house either didn't have it or it didn't extend that far. Maybe Chiyoh had saved the information they were looking at.

"I will start lunch," Will said to give them more time.

He made some noodles with vegetables, and enough for three, which was a good decision,

because Chiyoh stayed to eat with them. She had finished the book from Mrs. Komeda and discussed the plot a little with Will. To Will's surprise, Hannibal asked to read it next.

"I thought you had read it already," Will commented after Chiyoh left. He was washing the dishes as Hannibal dried.

"I did," Hannibal said. "But it has been a long time."

A long time, Will repeated in his mind. There were decades between them.

"How did you go so far back?" he asked pensive. "At a certain point in the past you couldn't have reached me to…." *kill me.*

"I had learned that dying or killing myself brought the same result," Hannibal answered.

Will stopped washing a pot and turned to Hannibal with wet hands.

"You killed yourself?"

It was a strange thought. Will could still hear Hannibal telling Francis that suicide was the enemy.

"Mostly I got myself killed," Hannibal answered without looking up. "There were many opportunities in my life where I could have died. I let them pass instead of trying to survive until I reached Mischa."

That was different to what Will had experienced. Getting himself killed had moved Will forward. He felt some vertigo at the realization that their rules really had been different. It made him feel helpless about what had happened to him.

"You were very young when Mischa died," Will noted to distract himself from the feeling. Hannibal placed the dry bowl on his lap and folded the cloth before he looked up.

"Yes," he said looking into Will's eyes.

"Did you kill them?"

"I did."

Hannibal's voice was ice cold, a memory of winter.

"We had been rescued only two days later the first time," Hannibal continued. "With their supplies it was easy to wait."

"And you felt no need to feed them to her?"

Will kneeled down and sat on the ground before Hannibal's wheelchair. He went to take the

cloth from Hannibal's lap to dry his hands. When he tried to pull it towards him, Hannibal took hold of his hands.

"It didn't seem prudent."

Never stopped you from feeding them to me, Will thought with anger.

"My hands are wet," he said instead of the accusations that came to mind. Hannibal took the towel and dried Will's hands. The cloth was rough.

"I have asked Chiyoh to look into other accommodation for us," Hannibal said and put the towel on the side.

"Okay…"

"She believes we will be too suspicious in Japan on our own," he added.

Will couldn't help feeling some satisfaction about the direction this was going.

"Did she have a suggestion, or do you have an idea?" he asked staring at his hands. He was unsure if he should leave them on top of Hannibal's lap. Maybe he wasn't welcome. As he pulled them away, Hannibal took hold of him.

"I was thinking of South America, because it's not a continent I have any connections with," Hannibal said. "Unfortunately the best medical infrastructure is in Brazil."

"Why unfortunately?" Will asked.

"The main language is Portuguese," Hannibal said. "I have basic knowledge of it, but if I remember correctly you speak French and Spanish besides English."

"Speaking would be an exaggeration," Will granted. "I understand some words when Robert and you talk. My Spanish is a bit better. But languages can be learned. Don't limit our options because of me, I can deal with it."

"We wouldn't have to stay forever," Hannibal said. He sounded like he was considering it. "We live there and get treatment for a few months and then resettle."

"Sounds good," Will agreed and smiled wide and encouragingly. The wound stretched and it hurt, but he ignored it.

"Yesterday," Hannibal said smiling back. "You told me what you would like for me, can you tell me what you would like for yourself?"

To wake up beside you, Will thought and pushed his other thoughts away. They were too sappy. Hannibal's question was important.

"Somewhere quiet," he said. "Close to a city is okay, but not in a city, please."

Hannibal nodded. Will assumed there was no surprise in his request.

“I would like a dog,” he confessed. “I miss mine.”

“I expected as much,” Hannibal said still smiling.

“Yeah,” Will said, a little embarrassed. “I guess I’m easy.”

“I wouldn’t say having to go to prison for a few years for you to join me, makes you easy.”

Hannibal sounded teasing and Will grinned sheepishly.

“No,” he replied. “You couldn’t say that.”

Grinning, he moved closer and put his head on Hannibal’s lap, his arms under it. Hannibal started petting his short hair.

“Will you let it grow?” Hannibal asked.

“Would that be wise?” Will asked back while stretching his head into Hannibal’s fingers. He felt a bit like his dogs, needy for touch. “Shouldn’t we stay incognito, look different and change our appearances?”

“Going by the press coverage we are currently receiving, I don’t believe making drastic changes will be necessary.”

“Hmm…,” Will said absently still enjoying the stroking. He vaguely thought about Alana and the Verger fortune behind her. He decided against mentioning it.

“We had cats,” Hannibal suddenly said and Will didn’t understand until he added. “Mischa liked them.”

He remembered the drawings of mangy cats.

“Did she adopt strays?” he asked.

“Yes,” Hannibal answered. “She was very much like you in that regard. Unable to resist any half-starved animal.”

“I never had cats,” Will said thoughtfully.

“They are very independent and opportunistic.”

“Leaving dead mice on the carpet?”

“On occasion.”

Like you, Will thought smiling. Just that Hannibal left dead humans for Will to find.

They stayed silent for a few more moments and Will enjoyed Hannibal's touch. His back started to ache after a while. Reluctantly, he got up.

"Do you have any plans for the rest of the day?" Will asked. "Are Chiyoh or Robert coming over?"

Hannibal shook his head.

"Then I think I should continue telling you about my time jumps."

Hannibal tilted his head.

"Do you want me to continue too?"

Will thought about it.

"I don't really feel ready to hear it to be honest."

He was still angry. Hannibal nodded once.

They tidied up a little more and settled on the bed as in the days before. Will was drawn between the urge to get as close as possible and the need to have distance. He had bottled up his jealousy and anger, but it still simmered inside of him. He ended up with his legs on Hannibal's lap.

"I woke up retching over my kitchen sink staring at Abigail's ear... and three aspirin," Will began. "I was kind of really done with everything. So I got my dogs taken care of, destroyed the evidence you had planted and went to the nearest hospital."

"Did you enjoy it?" Hannibal asked amused.

"It?"

"Foiling my plan?"

"Hmm… I was really sick and not able to enjoy anything to be honest," he answered. "But thinking about it now, well, I feel some vindication. Your counterpart must have been mystified."

"Yes, I would have been."

Smiling, Will continued. His satisfaction grew as he came to the part of playing Hannibal by outing Abigail. He stopped for a moment, his smile faded, before he explained his vague hope that Hannibal would recognize him.

"I never thought of that," Hannibal said contemplative.

Will scoffed.

“Because I never saw any recognition,” Hannibal added defensively but with a small smile.

“Okay,” Will said breathing out. “I concede that you have the better poker face. But, you have to agree you might... have wanted to see how far you could push me if we had both ended in the past together.”

Hannibal’s smile grew, he was probably thinking of a future together where nobody suspected them. It was a scenario with many possibilities. Especially now, with a future of hiding in front of them. He resumed his story. Hannibal didn’t interrupt him until Will explained the conclusion he had reached about his own jumps.

“It sounds like you are personating the power that moved us through time.”

“Hmm…”, Will hummed. “It felt like it, like someone was out to get me to…”

He looked at Hannibal and found him watching.

“To understand something.”

“To understand what?” Hannibal asked.

“That I wanted to be with you. No matter what.”

Will looked away. His stomach was burning as he thought of Hannibal leaving him for Mischa. Part of his mind was empathising with Hannibal, he couldn’t help but understand him, but he also wanted to beat Hannibal to a pulp for leaving him.

“You are angry.”

“Yes,” Will spat out, his hands balled into fists.

Hannibal didn’t say anything and Will was glad for it. He couldn’t imagine any words that would soothe his anger. Hannibal’s hands were gripping his ankles and slowly Will felt his rage drain away. His face relaxed and the pain in his cheek lessened.

“I died in the hospital,” he said after a few minutes. “The fever kept spiking and the treatments didn’t work. I didn’t know enough about the treatment I had gotten the first time to guide them. My last memory is being put in a bathtub with ice in it.”

He was silent again and Hannibal started petting his legs. He stroked over his calves until he reached Will’s feet and started massaging them. It was nice. If it were warmer, Will would have taken his socks off to get more skin to skin contact. He closed his eyes and let himself drop backwards on the bed.

“I woke up in my cell and started freaking out,” he continued. He felt himself relax under

Hannibal's hands and groaned quietly.

"Your cell," Hannibal reminded him after a while, but didn't stop massaging his feet.

"My cell," Will repeated. "It was the day of my release, but I didn't know that while I waited. I was so relieved when I realized I could leave. I warned Chilton and avoided Jack as I left. Didn't help though. Jack followed me to Wolf Trap. I haggled with Jack and wondered what to do. Frederick helped me make the decision. Even with my warning he ran into your trap and showed up at my house like the first time."

"He is very predictable," Hannibal said and Will could hear the smile in his voice.

"I killed him," Will said and Hannibal's ministrations stopped abruptly. He heard Hannibal inhale and opened his eyes halfway. Hannibal was staring at him.

"Does that turn you on?" Will asked directly.

"Does it turn -you- on?" Hannibal asked back and let his eyes gaze over Will's body.

"You can't embarrass me with that," Will said and spread his legs a bit. "I realized a few time jumps back that... you, killing, and sex have become a bit intertwined for me."

"Have they now," Hannibal murmured and let his hands roam back over his calves and knees.

Closing his eyes, Will threw his head backwards on the bed at the touch. He wanted. Unfortunately, it wouldn't work.

"Our logistics are wrong, aren't they?" he asked a bit shakily and opened his eyes again.

"Yes," Hannibal answered and pressed his lips tight together.

"Can you…?" Will stopped himself, not knowing how to ask it delicately.

"An erection is unlikely at this point," Hannibal answered without hesitation. "But I am aroused seeing you like this."

Sorry, Will said in his head. He didn't say it out loud. He felt like the time for apologizing for pushing them over the cliff had passed.

"Also, this bed is crap," he said instead and watched Hannibal smile widely.

"It very much is," he agreed with Will. "We can have a big comfortable bed when we move."

"Good," Will said closing his eyes again. "And a bathtub."

"Will?" Hannibal asked sounding curious. Will blinked and looked to him.

"Yes?"

“In your first time jump, when you courted me, did you enjoy it when I spent money on you?”

Will felt his cheeks flush as he vividly remembered the suit. His first reaction was to deny it, but in the face of time travel, murder, and cannibalism it seemed silly to be embarrassed about this.

“It aroused me,” he confessed, looking Hannibal straight in the eye and watching his reaction. He was very focussed on Will and his hands were tight around his ankles again. “I felt indecent and pampered, and I liked it.”

“Come here.”

Hannibal pulled on his legs. Slowly, Will sat up and moved closer to Hannibal, pushing his legs over Hannibal’s until he could sling one arm around his shoulder. Their faces were very close. They were both smiling. For a short moment Will felt guilty for being happy right now, knowing how much blood was on their hands, but he pushed the feeling away.

“Will you let me pamper you?” Hannibal asked.

“If it makes you happy, sure. But I reserve the right to veto if necessary.”

Hannibal nodded. Will saw his eyes flicker to Will’s lips and he leaned in for a kiss, which became many. He embraced Hannibal with his second arm too, so he wouldn’t lose balance and lost himself in their kisses. They didn’t move their hands, didn’t explore each other, but Will became aroused anyway. Being so close to Hannibal, tasting and smelling him was enough for him.

“Fuck,” he groaned as they took a break from kissing. “Sorry.”

“Why are you sorry?” Hannibal asked and put his hand over Will’s crotch, pressing lightly down on him.

“You said I can pamper you,” he reminded Will. “May I?”

Oh, Will thought. Hannibal wanted to get him off.

“Yes,” he said groaning. “Please.”

Hannibal didn’t hesitate. He quickly undid Will’s pants and slipped his hand inside Will’s boxers, taking out his half-hard cock. Hannibal’s hand felt rough. Will gripped and pulled it up to his mouth to lick over his palm, making it wet. When he let go, he looked up at Hannibal and found him staring at his mouth, his pupils were blown.

“Come on,” Will said, breathing heavily. “Make me forget myself.”

Hannibal kissed him again. His hand in Will’s pants and on his cock made up for it though. It

was still rough, but Will's saliva made it slick enough to be arousing instead of painful. He moaned into Hannibal's mouth and his hands gripped his hair tight. He wanted to move with Hannibal's touch, wanted to push into his hand, but the way he was sitting, his pants only slightly pushed down, it all hindered and constricted him. Hannibal controlled Will's arousal, his hand dictated the pace.

"Faster," Will whispered after breaking from Hannibal's mouth. "Please."

He kept talking, begging for release. Hannibal complied and his ministrations became quicker as Will moaned against Hannibal's throat. When Will came it was nearly painful. Hannibal stroked him through the aftershocks until Will pushed his hand away.

"Thank you," Will panted. He wanted to fall backwards, pull Hannibal beside him and sleep. He knew that wasn't possible though. Grudgingly, he got up. He was careful not to lean too much on Hannibal's legs. With a flinch he pulled his pants back up and looked at Hannibal's sweater. He had come on it. Will's eyes flickered briefly to Hannibal's lap, but there was no sign of an erection. When he looked back up, Hannibal was watching him with an amused smile.

"I will get you a new shirt," Will offered.

"I would appreciate if you would," Hannibal answered, definitely amused.

Frowning, Will went and got Hannibal a t-shirt and a shirt in exchange for the jumper before going into the bathroom with fresh boxers and pants for a quick clean up. He wondered if he should have offered something to Hannibal. Sex wasn't just about erections and orgasms. He had the urge to research it, but having no internet connection put a stop to that. The reminder of their situation made Will's rage resurface. He pushed it back down. He didn't like this simmering anger in himself, but he saw only two ways out. The first was to push it down until they left and hopefully it would dissolve, or go over to the house and murder Hannibal's family. He wouldn't do the latter. He still had some impulse control.

He concentrated on something else instead.

"I better wash the clothes by hand," he called out to Hannibal from the bathroom. "Chiyoh collects the washing, but I don't think we want her to wash this."

"A wise precaution," Hannibal answered loudly so Will could hear him.

Domestic, Will thought and filled the sink to let their stuff soak.

They lounged around afterwards. Will had gone back to the bed and placed his head on Hannibal's lap. He hoped Hannibal would take the chance and pet his hair and wasn't disappointed.

Later, Robert came over. He was hesitant and looked sad. He kept looking from Hannibal to Will, trying to gauge the situation. Will wondered what Hannibal had told him about their fight. How had he explained Will's ramblings? He pretended to be busy with a book while

the two men talked art in a mix of English and French. Hannibal would miss this the same way Will missed his dogs. Maybe that was only fair, they both had to compromise for the relationship.

When they started Hannibal's exercises, Will joined them on the ground and did his own stretches when he wasn't helping with Hannibal's. He was tired afterwards. Hannibal seemed slower too. But they were both better than a few days ago. The wound on his cheek, while still hurting, was getting better too. He could speak with less breaks now.

The next day Will left Hannibal after breakfast and took another walk through the woods. He wished he could take Hannibal with him and felt hurried the whole time he was outside. When he came back Chiyoh had joined them. She and Hannibal were looking at something on her laptop.

Will took his jacket off and went to look over Hannibal's shoulder onto the screen. Nothing too exciting, a map of South America and they had more tabs in the browser open. Will had never planned something like this, so he listened carefully as Hannibal and Chiyoh went through the options. He had a feeling that he would have to do this again in the future. They decided on Brazil as it had the best medical support and it was big enough to get lost in.

"I will handle the booking and preparations," Chiyoh said before she left.

"Thank you for your help," Hannibal answered instead of saying goodbye.

They had an early lunch and while Hannibal suggested they continue with Will's narrative, he didn't feel up to it and leafed through Hannibal's sketchbooks instead. He found comfort in the one with pictures of him in and hoped he would find the strength to be less possessive and not want to rip every page of Mischa and their life out of the other book. Will didn't like feeling this way. He put the sketchbook down and went back to the book he had started reading the day before. He had to restart it as he didn't remember anything.

"Are you feeling better?" Hannibal asked him later that day when Will joined him to prepare dinner. Of course he had realized Will was fighting with himself.

"I'm trying not to be angry," he said. "It's difficult."

"Why?"

Why? Will repeated in his head and blinked.

"Why am I angry?"

"Why is it difficult not to be angry?" Hannibal asked as he cut carrots for their dinner.

"I don't…. feel like it's justified," Will said slowly. "You were time travelling, that's not something you chose, and I'm not happy about your choices, but I understand them. Feeling

the urge to kill your family because of that is an overreaction."

"Is it?" Hannibal asked absently.

"Yes," Will answered and sighed.

"You are still judging yourself by very conventional rules," Hannibal noted.

"Don't tell me you want me to kill your family," Will answered annoyed.

"I don't, but I appreciate the impulse. The same way I appreciate you killing Bedelia in your first time jump. My counterpart didn't, but I like your possessiveness."

Will sighed exasperatedly.

"I didn't like it when you sent Francis after my family."

"Is that still true?"

Will stopped his preparations and stared into space. He didn't want Hannibal to touch them, but not because he wanted them for himself anymore. He just wanted them safe. Safe from him and Hannibal.

"You wouldn't do it again," Will said. "They don't matter anymore. I have left them behind for you."

"As I'm leaving my family behind for you now."

Yes, Will thought, satisfied and smiled. If he looked at himself from Hannibal's point of view, he felt normal. But looking at the world through Hannibal's eyes wasn't the healthiest thing he could do. Maybe it was good in matters like this though. He planned to stay with Hannibal, he had to allow himself some murderous impulses.

"But I had to make you," he told Hannibal.

"Make me?" Hannibal asked curiously. "Like I made you come with me?"

Fair assessment, Will thought and sighed again.

"Alright," he said, wanting a break from thinking. "I get what you mean and I agree, but I need some... time to muddle through it. Let it sink in."

Hannibal nodded and they continued cooking. As they finished dinner, Will asked: "Shall I tell you what happened after I killed Frederick?"

"Please," Hannibal said. The corners of his mouth curled into one of his little smiles. Will suppressed the urge to roll his eyes. Hannibal was easily amused, if one could count murder as easy entertainment.

“I went a little mad afterwards and dismembered him in my barn,” Will began his narration. “I dropped the parts in my freezer, took my dogs and left for the cliff house. I was surprised not to find Abigail there.”

“She was in Baltimore at that point in time,” Hannibal answered after a moment. He was frowning and sounded a bit unsure. Maybe it had taken him a moment to recall the information. Understandable as it had happened so long ago for him.

Will nodded. “I had guessed as much.”

He didn’t tell Hannibal about the days with just the dogs, but jumped right to the arrival of the Hannibal of that time. He recalled telling Hannibal everything and the catharsis he felt doing it. Just unloading the whole craziness on someone else, on Hannibal, had helped a lot. It had been different to what he was doing now. In the past he hadn’t given a fuck. Now, telling Hannibal what had happened to him was a slow and hard process, but it needed to be done. He needed to know what Will had experienced.

“I agree with my past counterpart,” Hannibal said as they came to the conclusion that the dogs hadn’t really been shot. Will sighed.

“Yeah,” he said. “I do too. I realized it at that point. Before, too much other stuff had happened and I hadn’t really had time to think everything through.”

He hesitated for a moment before he continued and told Hannibal again about the idea, the realisation that all the points in time he had experienced might be real even after he left them. He still felt shattered by that and he could hear his voice tremble when he told his Hannibal about the sacrifice the other Hannibal had made. When he looked at Hannibal, who had moved to the bed, he seemed intrigued.

“An unusual move on my part,” he commented when he noticed Will looking at him. “I wonder what drug he used.”

“It worked quickly,” Will noted.

“And had therefore less time to damage your body.”

Frowning, Will stared at Hannibal’s face. He remembered that expression from the other Hannibal when he suggested the dogs had not been shot.

“What are you thinking?”

“That waiting for your heart to stop and restarting it, would have been easy in that situation.”

Stunned, Will just stared at him before a grin bloomed on his face. He barely registered the pain it caused.

“Oh, that would be… good.”

The Hannibal of that time wouldn't be without his Will. Okay, his Will would probably think he had been kidnapped and try to kill Hannibal. Still, it was better than that Hannibal being alone.

"That makes you happy," Hannibal noted. Will nodded and went to the bed, sitting down beside Hannibal.

"The idea that I left all those timelines, all the Hannibals and Wills without… each other is really depressing for me. It's nice to think that at least one timeline hasn't been left in total devastation."

Will could see that Hannibal didn't get it.

"It's okay," he said when he understood why. "It's okay, I know you didn't think of it with your time jumps."

"The other Wills and Hannibals,... they weren't relevant to me."

"The other Mischa was," Will said. It still made him jealous and he felt his rage simmer. But he had a grip on it. Hannibal was his again, he wouldn't let him go. He could see the understanding grow in Hannibal.

"Yes," he said, "she was relevant."

"Good."

Will petted Hannibal's leg with a sharp smile.

They didn't talk afterwards. Will was sitting there and thought about the Hannibal at the cliff house and his Will. He hoped that Will had been revived.

He realized Hannibal had fallen asleep at some point and watched his relaxed face with a smile. It reminded him of Hannibal sleeping beside Abigail's bed in the hospital. He looked vulnerable.

But it was also disquieting to see Hannibal vulnerable. Not being able to walk was a hindrance if they had to fight in any way. Hannibal seemed okay with it. It worried Will though because he wasn't up to any fighting either. His shoulder wasn't okay yet. It had taken quite a lot of damage over the years, from the knife wound from his police days, followed by Jack and Chiyoh shooting it and now another knife wound.

Those thoughts made him get up and start his own stretching. It was easier than worrying. His muscles and tendons warmed up as he moved. He was better than he had been a few weeks ago. He made progress every day. It would be alright with time. His cheek too was healing. He still had to stop sometimes to relax his muscles for a moment, but it was getting easier.

When he turned back to the beds during one exercise, he saw Hannibal had woken up and was drawing. From the way he was looking at Will and then back to the paper, he might be drawing him. Will smiled and did a few more stretches to give him a show. It felt silly, but he gave it a few minutes before he stopped.

He sat on the bed and read for a while as Hannibal drew. They made dinner later and went to bed. Without discussing it, Will followed Hannibal to his bed and they arranged themselves in the limited space.

He regretted sharing a bed in the morning, because he woke up with a stiff neck and his shoulder caused him pain with every movement. Hannibal seemed stiff too, but his exercises seemed to help. Will tried to do his too but his shoulder was locked and hurting. Hannibal offered a massage and Will ended up sitting on the unused lower bed while Hannibal tried to tenderize the meat of his shoulder, at least that's what it felt like because a massage shouldn't be so painful.

However, when Hannibal was finished, Will felt better. His shoulder was hot and soft. His head was hanging down because Hannibal's ministrations had been easier to take that way. He didn't have the power to lift it. Hannibal's hand was touching his hair, testing the length, Will thought.

"You should sleep some more," Hannibal said. Will felt bad enough that he agreed. A little nap wouldn't hurt. He went to Hannibal's bed, buried himself under blankets that smelled of them and fell asleep hearing Hannibal worked in the kitchen.

He woke up hungry. From the sun he thought it must be nearly noon.

"Did I sleep the whole morning?" he asked with a rough voice.

"Yes," Hannibal answered from somewhere near Will's legs. "It seems you needed the rest. Sleeping together in this limited space is not the best idea with our injuries."

Will blinked and turned to look at Hannibal. He thought of arguing for a moment, but he felt too groggy from the additional sleep and his stomach demanding food.

"I'm hungry," he said and watched Hannibal move towards the kitchen.

Will smiled. Of course, a chance to feed him couldn't be wasted.

He considered getting up and helping Hannibal, but he felt too lazy and warm under the blankets. Only when Hannibal came back with soup and toast did Will sit up. He ate slowly. His arm and shoulder were feeling better now.

"Chiyoh has gone away to make some arrangements," Hannibal told him as he ate.

"For our travels?"

“Yes.”

Will nodded and spooned more soup into his mouth.

“She thinks we might have to leave shortly after her return,” Hannibal added, looking at the window.

That is quick, Will thought and watched Hannibal’s face while he continued eating.

“Are you okay with leaving so fast?” he asked after swallowing a bite.

“Part of me wishes to hold on to the past, while another part of me wishes to leave it all behind and concentrate on the future.”

How very human that was. Will couldn’t help but smile. Of course, Hannibal was always human, but it was easy to forget it, particularly when he was turning Will’s life upside down from within a prison cell.

“Do you want me to continue with my story?” Will asked to distract him.

Hannibal finally looked away from the window to Will and nodded.

“I would like that,” he answered. “My uncle will visit us shortly though.”

Will shrugged, delighted it didn’t hurt for once to move his shoulder.

“In the evening then.”

Hannibal nodded.

Will cleaned the kitchen and they were reading when Robert came. Hannibal and he spoke mostly French as they conversed and Will found himself trying to understand. They seemed relaxed with each other, discussing an artbook Robert had brought with him.

“Is it easier to discuss art with Robert then the important things?” Will asked after Robert had left.

“My uncle will never accept me fully,” Hannibal answered. “It’s easier to give him a safe basis for the conversation than to let us touch on topics that would cause him distress.”

Will snorted.

“You are playing nice?”

“In a way, yes.”

“But he came,” Will said and watched Hannibal closely. “When you needed help, he came.”

“I was surprised to see him,” Hannibal replied and stared out of the window. “We didn’t part amicably.”

And yet Hannibal had tried to keep him and his aunt out of his life to protect them. Will hadn’t been offered the same courtesy. He wanted to dig into the topic and ask what caused them to separate. It didn’t seem like the right moment for it though. He would have to come back to it at a later date.

“Let’s make some food,” Will said and got up from the bed. They went to the kitchen and it felt familiar and soothing to prepare the ingredients together.

“I woke up on the day you killed Abigail,” Will said after they finished chopping everything and Hannibal had started the rice cooker. Hannibal froze for a very short moment, and if Will hadn’t been expecting it, he would have missed it. He realized that he liked poking Hannibal a little with his experiences. Seeing Hannibal unsettled by them was rather satisfying.

He kept this time jump story as short as possible and didn’t try to smooth over his desperation. But he pointed out that he wanted to test how far he could stretch the rules by aiding Hannibal in killing him when he took all the aspirin. He didn’t ask if Hannibal thought his counterpart had taken care of Abigail. It was a moot point. He would never know.

“It was painful,” he added as they went to the main room with their meal. “But worth it. I came to just after Muskrat Farm. You were sitting in an armchair beside my bed in Wolf Trap, talking about teacups and time. I ran away with you and Chiyoh.”

It was easy to tell what had followed. Their stay at the cliff house and Will trying to let himself be lulled into the dream again. While he laid it all out to Hannibal, Will wondered if he should feel embarrassed about his obvious wanting. He decided not to be. Hannibal once went to prison so Will couldn’t forget him. They were on the same level with yearning.

When it came to the eventual betrayal, he stumbled over telling Hannibal about how the other timelines’ Hannibal had anticipated it and his subsequent death. He half expected Hannibal to judge him for it, but his face was emotionless. Will reminded himself, that Hannibal killed a lot of Wills to get to his sister.

“The next time I died during the fight with Francis,” he said reigning in his rage. “And then we were falling.”

“And together again,” Hannibal added.

Will took a deep breath and nodded. He felt a bit lighter now, after having told his side.

“Do you have questions?” he asked Hannibal.

”Do you?” Hannibal asked back. “You have not requested that I continue my narration.”

Will took a slow and deep breath.

“It still makes me angry,” he said. “I don’t think it’s good for me to be angry with you right now.”

“Hmm,” Hannibal said and looked away from Will. “I see the differences in our actions during the time jumps. I understand your anger. You realized I was the one you wanted, you didn’t accept any… unfinished versions of me. I instead, chose to ignore you.”

This doesn’t help with the anger, Will thought and got up to take their plates into the kitchen area to wash them. Behind him, Hannibal continued to speak.

“I did look you up sometimes,” he said thoughtfully. “But I didn’t dare to ever meet you. It was too seductive. I was working very hard to… not be myself.”

Will didn’t want to get that, but his empathy was overwhelming him with understanding.

“You didn’t want her to be swallowed by the darkness,” he murmured. “But you could have pretended with him…”

“No,” Hannibal immediately rejected the idea. “Like you, I couldn’t accept an unfinished version of you. And pulling your darker side out of you would have destroyed the world I built for my sister.”

Will turned with a frown to look at Hannibal.

“Were you happy?” he asked as he had before.

“I was content,” Hannibal repeated his previous notion.

Will let the word “content” go through his head.

“I could have been content in the other timelines, but I’m not sure I would have been really happy. Something,” *Hannibal*, Will thought, “was always missing.”

Will didn’t sleep well that night. He was in his own bed and missed feeling Hannibal beside him. He woke up a few times from dreams about the other timelines' Hannibals. He was tempted to crawl back into Hannibal’s bed, but after the last night and how crappy they had both felt in the morning, he didn’t.

The next day, he woke up after Hannibal and listened to him working in the kitchen from the bed. Tomorrow they would probably leave and Robert would want some time with Hannibal during the day.

He got up, washed and dressed himself. Hannibal had an omelette and coffee ready for him when he was finished. They spoke a bit about the logistics of their move. Chiyoh would come with them, at least to begin with. He wanted to ask Hannibal if he would miss his family, but they had spoken about it before. The urge to ask again came from him and his worry of not

being enough. He pushed the thought away and went to pack their belongings.

“We will have to do some shopping,” Hannibal noted as he watched Will.

Will huffed nearly silently.

“You will have to keep in mind that we need to keep a low profile,” he said as he remembered the suits. There was no protest from Hannibal.

“But you can buy some clothes you’d like to see me in,” he added as a treat. “As long as they’re reasonable.”

He looked over at Hannibal, smiling warmly. Hannibal was watching him and Will could see the corners of his mouth trying to move upwards. He liked the idea.

“It would be my pleasure,” Hannibal finally said but without smiling.

The Hannibal in Will's first time jump would have smiled, would have flirted back. Will turned back to their luggage and finished folding and putting it into the bags. It was as if Hannibal had forgotten some of his social skills. His reactions felt somewhat barren. Will wondered if he was depressed. For a moment he considered asking Hannibal. Maybe he would give him an honest answer, or maybe not. It might be better to just observe him at this point. Maybe he would get better when they got out of here and he could surround himself with the luxury he enjoyed.

Robert came very early that day, which didn’t surprise Will. He gave them some space and went for another walk. Luckily, the weather was okay. The sky was clear and there was no rain. The woods had become familiar to him and he liked the route Chiyoh had shown him. He still missed his dogs when he walked. Running around outside without them felt strange.

When he was on his way back to the cottage he found Robert waiting for him at the edge of the garden. He was sitting on a rock. Will slowed down as he came closer to the man. He must have been waiting for him.

Chapter End Notes

"Are you still planning to post on the 31.12.2018?" My timezone is Central European Standard Time. My 31.12.2018 might be your 01.01.2019. ;) Time travel!!!

A happy new year to everyone already in 2019!

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Will just found Robert waiting for him after a walk.

Please check out the art for this chapter by the lovely KeyrenSoul. <3

"Robert," Will greeted him as he stopped.

He looked up at Will with a nervous smile. The resemblance to Hannibal made Will's heart flutter for a second. The soft feeling smothered the rage he still felt over being here with Hannibal's family. Seemingly lost, Robert looked away without speaking. Will waited, assuming the other man had something to say.

"Is this a shovel talk?" Will tried to start the conversation when Robert hadn't spoken after what felt like a minute.

"Shovel talk?" Robert asked confused.

"Ah," Will said and looked down sheepishly. "It's an American colloquialism… about beating someone with a shovel if they are not good to a loved one."

Robert nodded, but seemed distracted.

"I'm not really capable of beating you or Hannibal with a shovel, Will."

Will couldn't help but smile.

"I thought you might be under his influence; a victim", Robert said and Will stopped smiling.

"Why?" Will asked. Robert looked away from the garden towards the woods.

"Neither I nor my wife were surprised when Hannibal went to prison," he began. "I read the news and later the… fan sites. Many believed you to be guilty too, but I… I know Hannibal and I thought you would be, as I said, under his influence."

Robert sighed and looked up to Will.

"But you are not, are you, Will?" he asked. Before Will could answer he continued. "The two

of you are leaving because you want to, not because Hannibal is forcing you to."

"I suppose so," Will said and shrugged. Hannibal wanted to leave, but Will's wishes had pushed him to the decision.

"Will you…" Robert stopped and pressed his lips together so hard all the colour left them. Then he licked over them before he spoke again, "Will you stop him from killing?"

Will stared at him blankly.

Stop him from killing?

It should be easy to say yes, but it wasn't. Will felt dizzy at the realisation. He hadn't even thought about it. But Robert had, because Robert hadn't… been changed by Hannibal.

"I… don't think I could."

Robert frowned and looked disappointed. Will understood why. Even to his own ears he sounded weak.

"That's not an answer," Robert said.

True, Will thought. It wasn't an answer. He wasn't sure he had an answer. He looked away from Robert and his disappointment, trying to find the rage he had felt before. He only found a memory of guilt.

"I don't plan… I don't think we will behave like Hannibal did in Baltimore," he finally said.

He wanted to add more. He wanted to promise they wouldn't kill, but he knew it was unlikely. He had gotten a taste and as passive as Hannibal was right now, Will couldn't imagine him staying like that forever. On the other hand, he had resisted for decades in the timeline he had lived in with Mischa. With that thought, some of Will's questions about Hannibal's behaviour since the fall answered themselves. Hannibal had dampened himself down for Mischa. Even with her gone again, he was still doing it. And Will didn't like it because it wasn't really him.

"I want him to be happy," Will said and looked back to Robert. His anger was back but it felt smaller now. It wasn't really Robert that kept Hannibal in his current state. Hannibal had caged himself.

If killing made Hannibal happy, Will didn't care. He thought it very likely, but he didn't tell Robert that. He didn't want to give him any reason to betray them. He liked the man, but he didn't completely trust him. He wasn't a killer and no matter how much he wanted to protect Hannibal, his morals where higher than theirs.

"We did talk about getting a house somewhere remote when we have recovered," he explained. He wanted to smooth this over and give Robert enough hope of a future without victims so he would let them go without betrayal. "Get a dog or two."

Robert did indeed look hopeful when Will spoke, but he avoided looking into Will's eyes.

"But I can't promise you we won't kill anyone. He… we have enemies. If it means protecting me, he will kill." And wasn't that an interesting idea, to bring out the old fire in Hannibal? Will pushed it aside for now. "And I too will kill to protect him."

Robert nodded, his shoulders were hanging down.

"Will you still let us go without alerting the authorities?" he asked the older man directly.

Robert's head came up abruptly and he focused on Will.

"I don't… I wouldn't…"

"You should," Will said, testing the waters. "He is a monster. I'm one too."

Helplessly, Robert stared at Will. He looked very sad and lifted his hands for Will to see.

"He was such a small little thing when he was born. Silent and always attentive. I loved him from the first time I held him in my arms. And then I left him and I failed him and Mischa and Filip and Roze," he lowered his hands and his eyes, "I left and they all died. Only Hannibal survived, but he was broken and I couldn't fix him."

There was nothing to fix, Will thought, but didn't say. And maybe he hadn't even broken; maybe Mischa's death had just refined what had been there all along.

"I can't fix him, but I can help him to be free," Robert said with a rough voice. Will felt overwhelmed from the guilt he projected.

"Whatever he… we do when we are gone, you are not responsible," he said, trying to placate Robert.

"Aren't I?" Robert asked staring down at the earth.

"No," Will lied. "You are helping your nephew, the boy you held."

They stayed together for a while in silence. Will wasn't sure if he should add anything else to make Robert feel better about letting them leave. He wasn't as experienced as Hannibal with this. He thought it was enough and only nodded when Robert stood up and said he was going back to the house. He followed him for a short distance. His eyes kept flitting to the stones on the ground, but he didn't pick any up, didn't use it to protect them like his hindbrain wanted him to. Instead he stopped at the cottage entrance and watched Robert go to the safety of his house.

Chiyoh was in the cottage and was helping Hannibal with his exercises when Will came in. They nodded to each other in greeting. Will quickly averted his eyes afterwards. He feared

she would see the murderous thoughts he just had on his face if she looked at him for too long. He hid himself behind a book sitting on Hannibal's bed as they worked. His mind kept circling around Hannibal's changes and how he could pull him out of whatever was holding him back. He kind of liked the idea of poking Hannibal like Hannibal had poked him when they first met.

Afterwards they went through the arrangements Chiyoh had made. They would indeed leave the next day as Hannibal had suspected. Their route was very complicated as they didn't want to fly with a stopover in the US. Hannibal wanted to avoid overly long flights. It would take them over five days and Will wasn't looking forward to the jetlag.

"What are you thinking about?" Hannibal asked after Chiyoh had left. Will had gone back to bed and his mind had gone back to the idea of manipulating Hannibal into killing after a century of abstaining.

"How to manipulate you," Will said nonchalantly and suddenly Hannibal's full attention was on him.

"To do what?" he asked interested and Will smiled widely, pulling on the scarring on his cheek.

"Wouldn't you like to know?"

Hannibal leaned towards him.

"You won't tell me?" he asked and Will blinked slowly and licked his lips.

"I think it will be more fun if you don't know, don't you agree?"

"A game?" Hannibal asked intrigued.

"A challenge," Will corrected and put his book away. "Will you help me with my stretching?"

"Of course," Hannibal said after short consideration.

They spent their last evening in the cottage quietly. Will fell asleep on Hannibal's bed after dusk. When he woke up in the morning he found Hannibal in the fold out bed and flinched when he thought about his back.

"Should have woken me, you idiot," he murmured with a crooked smile and got up as quietly as possible.

Later, when Hannibal woke, Will had to help him out of the bed and pulled him under the shower where he let the hot water stream over them until the tank was empty.

"Better?" he asked as he helped Hannibal dry himself.

“Yes,” Hannibal answered.

Will continued to watch Hannibal carefully as they got ready to leave. After a while, he got a strong painkiller from their supplies and handed them to Hannibal with a glass of water.

“We have a long drive ahead of us,” Will urged him. Sighing, Hannibal swallowed the pills.

With Hannibal a bit hazy and bound to the wheelchair, Will was on his own as he cleaned the cottage. Chiyoh had gotten bleach and he used it on everything that they might have left their DNA on. Afterwards he wiped the surfaces and put all the used textiles in a plastic bag and smashed their tablet to pieces. Chiyoh would burn what was left after she had driven them to their destination. He knew a good forensic team would still be able to find proof that they had been here, but not every forensic team was good and hopefully the cottage would never be searched.

Chiyoh and Will carried Hannibal to the car when it was time to leave. It stressed Will’s shoulder so much, Chiyoh had to get their luggage.

Robert came out of the house as Will placed their luggage into the trunk with his good arm and Chiyoh was getting the wheelchair. Will looked over at the windows of the house as Hannibal and Robert spoke in low voices. There was no movement behind the curtains, no shadows in the windows. She was a tough woman, Will thought with a small smile.

To his surprise, Robert hugged first Hannibal and then him as he said goodbye.

Chiyoh was driving and, through the rear view mirror, Will watched Hannibal as they drove away. He was looking out of the side window, his face expressionless. His pupils were blown, but that was most likely from the painkillers.

“Maybe try to sleep some more?” Will urged him.

“It would probably exaggerate my condition,” Hannibal said and looked at Will through the mirror.

“It’s only a few hours to the airport,” Chiyoh interrupted.

Alright, Will thought. He looked out of the window for a while until they reached a road with high traffic and a less picturesque view. Somewhere in the middle of the trip he nodded off. He heard Chiyoh and Hannibal talking, but didn’t understand them. Maybe because he was half asleep or maybe because they were speaking in a different language. He woke up half an hour before they arrived at their destination.

Chiyoh didn’t take them directly to the airport. They wanted to avoid cameras. Instead she let them out at the train station two stops from the airport. The station was a bit run down and Will couldn’t find any surveillance, as Chiyoh had advised in her briefing. He let Chiyoh and

Hannibal talk as he took out their luggage and the wheelchair. She helped him get Hannibal into the chair. While he hadn't expected a long goodbye with her, they would meet up again in a few days after all, it was still surprising that she only gave him a nod while looking into his eyes before she got back into the car and drove off. For a moment Will felt lost.

"We need to get the train," Hannibal said behind him.

Will turned and instead of feeling lost he suddenly felt free. Will smiled.

Thankfully, they didn't have a lot of luggage because helping Hannibal with the wheelchair and having more bags would have been really annoying. As it was, they had two backpacks; one that Will carried and one that Hannibal placed on his lap.

The train ride was fine, Hannibal distracted him by explaining about inconsequential things like how the tickets were checked and schedules organized. Will asked him if he had lived here before and Hannibal nodded and said it had been a long time ago. Will didn't ask in which timeline.

The airport was hell. Will wished he could control his face as well as Hannibal as he moved under the watchful eyes of cameras and security. They had made good time on the road and had over three hours until departure. Will expected them to be torturous until Hannibal reminded him about the shopping they wanted to do.

First, they bought suitcases. A mishap during their trip, Hannibal explained, smiling sheepishly, to the shopkeeper and asked if he could get rid of their old bags. The suitcases were bigger than the bags Chiyoh had organized and they filled them easily after visiting some of the clothes stores. Will found the whole thing ridiculous especially as some of the clothes for him were really unusual but he was grateful for the distraction from the possible risks they were taking. And Hannibal throwing money around and being fussy distracted from them as people. The same could be said for his scar. Other travellers looked at it, some quite obviously found it abhorrent. Will thought it very unlikely they would remember his face in detail or connect it to possible photographs.

Going through security was another thing, but the staff seemed to be not very interested in them and, apart from the exchange of wheelchairs, nothing exceptional happened. The airport wheelchair was clunky and not particularly easy to maneuver. They decided to stay put at the gate until it was time to board. It was too tiring for both of them to move the airport wheelchair.

At some point Will got them some food. Hannibal looked with distaste at the plastic wrapping, but ate it nevertheless. Will left Hannibal again and got them two books and a selection of newspapers and magazines from the English section in the shop. After having been stuck in the cottage without internet for all this time it was really good to get in contact with the outside world again.

They got on the plane first because of the wheelchair. They were sat in first class, which was nice, and the space was helpful to make Hannibal comfortable. Still, Will was glad that Hannibal slept through most of the flight. Will went to the bathroom halfway through and as

he was sitting in the very small compartment, he was glad that Hannibal had catheterized himself. The idea of having to somehow carry him in here was troubling.

Will thought about Hannibal's restriction during the remainder of the flight while he watched his sleeping face. He wondered if Hannibal had been truthful when he said his ability to walk should return, and wondered how life would be if he hadn't been.

They had a stopover in Germany for 16 hours. Will was too tired and too stressed over logistics to worry too much over the security at the airport. They had booked a wheelchair accessible room at an airport hotel and Will was incredibly grateful for German efficiency when they checked in and the staff got their stuff and them to the room in no time. He tipped them generously.

They slept like the dead and their alarm went off after too few hours. They each took a very long shower in the big shower stall. After having to be careful with the hot water in the cottage, it was heaven for Will to just stand under the stream until his muscles loosened.

They ate at the hotel restaurant. It was nearly evening and the restaurant was full of people. But the lights were dimmed and they got a table in the corner so the wheelchair had space. The food was okay and the coffee after was heavenly.

They took a taxi back to the airport and started a repeat of their check-in in Japan though they didn't go shopping this time. Interestingly, Hannibal seemed to understand a fair bit of German. The duty-free shop had wide aisles and they spent some time at the newspaper and books sections. Hannibal bought two German books while Will got more newspapers and magazines. They had abandoned everything they had read in the hotel waste bin before they left.

Chiyoh joined them in the Netherlands. Not directly, of course. She just boarded the same plane. But while Hannibal and he traveled first class again, more a necessity than a luxury with the wheelchair, Chiyoh was in coach. Still, Will was more relaxed having her close by.

The plane had a toilet that was accessible for the small inflight wheelchair, which meant Hannibal hadn't catheterized himself this time. Hannibal seemed fine either way, but Will was glad for him. Dignity was important to Hannibal and not being able to handle his own bodily functions had to be stressful at some level.

"How are you doing?" Will asked in a low voice when they were in the air for a hour.

Hannibal turned in the seat to face Will.

"I will be glad when we arrive," he answered as quietly as Will. He did look a little pale.

"Do you need your painkillers?"

He had taken some on the last flight, but that was a few hours ago. To Will's surprise

Hannibal nodded and Will got the pills from their bag in the overhead bins. Hannibal dozed after taking them. Will put a blanket over him and hoped he would sleep through the worst of his discomfort. He watched an inflight movie, but wasn't impressed and went back to read the book he had bought two airports ago.

Hannibal missed the first meal but woke up for the second. They ate and Will noticed Hannibal was eating very mechanically and without great appetite. He hoped it was just the quality of the food.

Afterwards Hannibal had to use the toilet. The stewards helped him in the wheelchair and Hannibal told Will to wait outside. He waited in front of the door, feeling helpless and again guilty for the injury he had caused.

Hannibal was getting better, Will reminded himself. He had done the exercises with him and could feel how his movements had become stronger as the days passed.

When they were back at their seats, Will felt weird for having had his little freak-out. When this journey was over, Will decided, he would speak with Hannibal about his needs and he would insist on knowing more about the prognosis. The decision helped Will calm down and he slept for the last hours of the flight. He woke up to Hannibal placing a hand on his forearm. Sleepily, Will turned and blinked.

"We will land soon," Hannibal said, sitting up in his seat. Will got up as well and straightened the seat.

Even with the sleep he had gotten, Will felt bone tired from their traveling. He still felt nervous when they went through customs. Nothing happened though and soon they were stood outside. It was warm and sunny and Will's first thought was that he would have to buy some hats.

They waited patiently and let the other people pass them until Chiyoh stopped close by with the rental she had collected. When they and their luggage were stored inside, they left the airport behind them. Will felt the tension leave him as it got smaller in the rear window.

Will hadn't liked the idea of an apartment when they had planned their stay. An apartment meant neighbours and that felt risky. But having a wheelchair accessible place had overruled his wish for anonymity.

He was very happy they had decided on the flat when they arrived and settled in. It was brilliant. Everything was in easy reach for Hannibal, there were no steps anywhere. The doors were wide and the rooms spacious. It was all very modern. Will assumed Hannibal wouldn't like the décor but would appreciate the comfort.

They had left Europe at night and now it was morning. Somewhere in between they had lost hours due to the time difference. Will wasn't sure what time his body was expecting. He didn't feel too tired, but his thoughts felt slow and dampened. They made a mutual decision to stay awake until evening, to get used to the new rhythm.

There was a guest room which Chiyoh took and Will moved his and Hannibal's luggage into the master bedroom. Then he had a minor fight with Hannibal about who would sleep on which side of the bed. Hannibal wanted the one closest to the door. Will noted that he wouldn't be much use if someone came in while they slept, which didn't go down very well.

As quickly as his addled brain allowed it, Will added that he would probably sleep with his back to Hannibal if he didn't have the side closest to the door. He couldn't sleep on his bad shoulder right now for long periods. Hannibal stared at him for a long moment and then nodded. Will started laughing.

"Will?" Hannibal asked sharply and controlled.

"Sorry, sorry," Will said between the laughter. "It's just that…" he stopped and took a deep breath to calm himself, "I think that was our first domestic."

Hannibal blinked.

"If one doesn't count imprisonment, gunshots, or knife fights," Hannibal noted without smiling. But Will could see that his shoulders had relaxed.

"Doesn't count," Will insisted. "At least not for me and let's make it a rule that your view on how to start and maintain a relationship doesn't count in general."

Hannibal's eyebrows rose.

"In my defence," he slowly said and the corners of his mouth were curling a little, "I didn't expect a relationship when we met."

"No love at first sight?" Will asked jokingly. "Poor me."

"I didn't say that."

Oh, Will thought and it was his turn to blink in surprise.

"Oh", he repeated aloud.

There was a knock at the open door and Will felt his face heat up as he turned to Chiyoh. He wondered how much she had heard.

"May I use the bathroom first?" she asked.

"Please do," Hannibal answered smoothly.

Will hurried to busy himself with their luggage after she left. He didn't want to continue the conversation.

"I will inspect the kitchen," Hannibal said, being merciful for once.

After Will had put their clothes away, he didn't really have an excuse to stay in the bedroom. He went to the kitchen where Hannibal was preparing food.

Breakfast, Will thought.

They fell into the easy companionship of preparing food together. The kitchen must have been very well stocked with everything, because they had a lavish choice of breakfast foods.

"No coffee?" Will asked when he realized what was missing.

"I would prefer to have a shower before we eat," Hannibal said.

Will nodded, he felt gritty and getting rid of the sweat from traveling would feel good.

Chiyoh came from the bathroom with wet hair but dressed in sleek trousers and a loose hanging blouse. Hannibal left for his shower and declined their offers for help.

"We could eat on the balcony," Chiyoh suggested when Will found the plates in one of the cupboards and took them out. "The sunlight will help us stay awake."

Will agreed and they set the table together. He found some orange juice in the fridge and poured himself a glass while Chiyoh made herself some tea with a tea bag. It was probably good Hannibal wasn't in the kitchen to see that.

When Hannibal came back freshly showered and shaved, Chiyoh was sitting on the balcony braiding her hair. A steaming teacup was sitting in front of her on the table. Will smiled at the normality of the situation, happy his cheek was barely hurting at the movement.

His own shower was quick and he didn't bother to shave even when the stubble was itchy. He missed his beard. He didn't really have any comfortable clothes for a day at home, but Hannibal had bought him some light pants and shirts.

The smell of coffee greeted him when he joined Hannibal and Chiyoh at the table. They didn't speak much, just leisurely ate and then drank their beverages.

Hannibal had to lie down after breakfast to give his back a rest. Will cleaned up the kitchen and filled the dishwasher, inwardly praising their return to civilisation.

"I'm going for a walk," Chiyoh told him an hour later. He was on the sofa in the sitting room that was connected to kitchen and balcony. "Do you need me to get anything?"

Will looked up from the newspaper he was holding.He was doing the crossword puzzle, poorly.

"You know you are not our errand boy… girl, uh… woman?"

She smirked at his slip of tongue.

“In a way I am,” she said amused. “I do not mind. I want to have a walk outside. If we need something, I can buy it and bring it back.”

It felt weird having her do everything. In Japan, they hadn’t had a choice.

“Phones and computers,” he suggested and hurried to add, “But that’s not urgent. We can get them tomorrow or even later.”

“I will have a look anyway,” she decided. She didn’t seem to be bothered. Will was worried about her place with them anyway. They continuously used her like a henchman. Fetch this, help with that.

He wandered through the flat after Chiyoh had left. It felt partially like a hotel room and Will couldn’t help feeling like he was on vacation. He ended up in the bedroom where Hannibal was lying on the bed. He had turned on the radio. Some classical music was playing. Hannibal had his eyes closed. Will was sure he wasn’t asleep even though he looked like he was. He watched him from the door for a while but didn’t join him in bed. There were questions in his mind, but he was too tired to ask them. Will left and went back to the living room, still feeling restless.

He did his stretches and exercises to help his shoulder. He had to throw all the blankets he could find on the floor. There were no mats like in the cottage. Afterwards he started a shopping list. He put “yoga mats” and “hats” and “sunglasses” on it and decided to ask Hannibal about the kitchen later. He probably needed more stuff.

Hannibal came out of the bedroom shortly after. Will was relieved to see him. He had trouble staying awake and hoped the company would help. His head felt like someone had stuffed cotton wool into it.

“You look tired,” Hannibal said.

“I am tired.”

“You could sleep.”

“Hmm,” Will said. “Wasn’t it you that said staying awake until the evening would be wise?”

“A short nap shouldn’t hurt,” Hannibal said. Will thought it sounded condescending and felt his hackles rise before he reminded himself that his temper wasn’t the best when he was tired.

“Lie down on the sofa,” Hannibal suggested. “I will wake you in 30 minutes.”

Will tried to think about it, but he was really too exhausted to make any decisions.

“OK,” he finally said and took one of the blankets to the sofa.

“Chiyoh went for a walk,” he said as he got comfortable. He made an effort to speak very precisely and closed his eyes. “I started a shopping list. Maybe add what you want for the kitchen? She might bring hardware or maybe not?”

“It’s alright, Will,” Hannibal said from a distance. “I will figure it out.”

Will dreamt of airports and planes. Alana somehow found them when they exited an airplane toilet and looked disappointedly at them. A child that looked like Mason Verger grabbed her hand and pulled her away into a marketplace.

Knuckles stroking his stubbly cheek woke him. Confused, Will opened his eyes. He fully expected Alana to be there, but it was Hannibal.

“You slept for a little over 30 minutes,” he told Will, moving his hand away.

“Doesn’t feel like it,” Will mumbled.

“I made more coffee.”

He could smell that, it was a wonderful smell after sleep. Especially when more sleep was preferable. Will followed Hannibal to the kitchen and carried the coffee outside to the balcony without them discussing it. Hannibal, like him, had spent weeks inside. Sitting in the sun was nice.

They didn’t speak and just enjoyed the sun. After finishing his coffee, Hannibal took Will’s discarded newspaper and started to read it. For a while Will watched him. He got restless again and wandered back to the bedroom. He took out the book he was currently reading and unenthusiastically read for a while. After he had read a particularly dumb scene, he dropped the book on the bedside table.

Will woke in the darkness and to strange sounds. His heart was racing, his breath was loud and fast, and his shirt was soaked with sweat. He didn’t remember what he had dreamt.

“It’s February the 3rd, 2019,” someone, Hannibal, said beside him. “It’s shortly after 5am and you are in São Paulo, Brazil. We are in the master bedroom of the flat we rented.”

“I thought…” Will said as he took slow breaths to calm himself down. “For a moment I thought I was back in another time.”

He reached out for Hannibal and touched his arm. He was dry and warm and Will felt grounded. He listened to Hannibal breathing until he fell asleep again. He didn’t sleep deeply in this second stretch. He was aware of Hannibal’s presence beside him, the sound of birds greeting the morning and the soft light of dawn. Gentle breaths against his forehead woke Will up again. He was lying half on Hannibal’s chest and Hannibal had put an arm around his shoulder to hold him close.

“No more bad dreams?” Hannibal asked with a voice rough from sleep.

“No,” Will answered. “Thanks for calming me down in the night.”

“Always,” Hannibal said, smiling.

They got up and ready for the day. Will was ready before Hannibal and because he didn’t want Will’s help, Will went to the kitchen on his own. As he walked through the sitting room, he saw some boxes on the dining table. He checked them out and found two thin laptops with touchscreen functionality. They felt way too modern for Will, but Hannibal would probably like them. He left them unpacked for the moment and made breakfast.

They ate on the balcony again and Hannibal gave them both a small lesson in Portuguese. How to say hello and the vocabulary for the food they were eating. Chiyoh had a very accurate and neat way of pronouncing the new words. Will felt like he was mumbling compared to her.

He asked Hannibal to set up the laptops as he tidied up the table and kitchen with Chiyoh. When he was finished he joined Hannibal and they spent the day tinkering around with the new hardware, setting up email accounts and memorizing information. Before they left Japan, Hannibal had drilled a backup plan in Will’s head in case they were caught.

This time he went further. By the end of the day Will knew how to access two bank accounts that were set up in his aliases’ names and where matching passports had been deposited. It felt weird and after thinking about it as he got ready for bed, Will realized that it was a sign of trust on Hannibal’s part to give him this information. He could run off tonight and live off the money for the rest of his life.

Flattered about Hannibal’s trust, Will decided to do some research into having sex without an erection. Hannibal getting him off in the cottage had been nice, but he wanted to return the favor. The topic appeared to be simpler yet more difficult than he had imagined. He decided he needed some time to digest it and to speak with Hannibal as he pressed close to him when they went to bed.

“I like this bed,” Will told Hannibal with a tired voice after they turned off the light.

“It is much better than our last,” Hannibal agreed.

The next day Chiyoh was given a job over breakfast instead of new words and phrases in Portuguese. Hannibal handed her a list of neurosurgeons he had considered for treatment and asked her to scout them out. Will was reminded again that they used her like an assistant a lot. After she left, wearing a sporty dress and runners, they cleaned up the kitchen. He wanted to approach the topic, but was stopped by Hannibal handing him a list too. Frowning, Will studied the names and specialities of the doctors.

“Are plastic surgeons really a priority right now?” he asked, confused.

Hannibal's eyes went to Will's cheek and he shook his head.

"Getting treatment for my spine will be risky with the Verger family crest on my back," he explained and Will grimaced.

"Did they put up a reward again?" he asked.

"Yes," Hannibal answered. "It is quite substantial."

Will sighed.

"Will it delay your treatment?"

"I have an idea for a cover story that would explain some touch aversion on my part," Hannibal said, avoiding looking at Will. "But the less recognisable the crest, the easier it will be in the long term."

"What's that cover story?" Will asked.

"We were victims of a hate crime."

The idea baffled Will at first, because the word "victims" felt wrong in connection with them. But it was a good story. It explained all their injuries, would excuse any reluctance to talk about them and any overprotectiveness they displayed.

"Could we maybe put a bandage over it when you visit the neurosurgeon?" Will pondered. "We could tell them it's not something you wish others to see. It could speed your treatment up."

"It's an option," Hannibal agreed.

They left the kitchen and Will sat down in an armchair to study the list. In the US he would have known how to start this, but here, he didn't even speak the language.

"I could use my scar to get an appointment, see how they are when speaking to me," he said thinking aloud.

"Do they speak English?" he asked. He could check it himself, but Hannibal had put together the list and would know. He looked to Hannibal and met a watchful gaze.

"Most of them do," Hannibal answered. "They work with foreign patients."

Will hummed, understanding.

"Do you understand why you are getting this list and not the one with the neurosurgeons, Will?"

Because I have a scar? Will thought, suddenly feeling annoyed. He looked away from Hannibal's unblinking eyes and down at the list.

"The neurosurgeon can live after he treats me," Hannibal slowly explained and with every word Will felt more ill. "The plastic surgeon cannot after seeing the Verger crest."

Will couldn't look up. His heart was loud and his stomach was cramping.

"Breathe, Will," Hannibal said and Will let go of the breath he had been holding and inhaled deeply afterwards.

"Do you understand?" Hannibal asked again.

Will wanted to shake his head, but of course he did understand. In Hannibal's eyes, Will was more willing to find a doctor to sacrifice than Chiyoh. And Hannibal was right. Still looking at the names, Will knew he would. He wanted them to be safe and he would do whatever it took.

"Yes," he said. He gripped the papers and stood up, avoiding eye contact. "Excuse me."

He left the room and went to the bedroom. His heart was racing and he could feel his blood pulse through his body. Shaking, Will sat down on the bed and tried to calm down. He didn't look down at the page, didn't want to see the names. Minutes passed and his breathing and his heart slowed down. Will let himself fall backwards onto the bed and pressed the papers against his stomach, against Hannibal's scar. The shaking of his fingers stopped, but the fear he felt stayed as a cold and hard ball in his stomach.

The door opened and Hannibal rolled the wheelchair into the room. Will wanted to close his eyes, but he stopped himself. He didn't look at Hannibal though. Hannibal stopped the chair beside him and the bed. He reached out and touched Will's cheek with an open hand. The warmth was shocking against Will's clammy skin. Will turned his head and found Hannibal watching him with a curious expression and not judging as Will had imagined.

"Am I asking too much?"

How gentle he sounded. It made Will frown. Hannibal wasn't one to give in. He should be trying to make Will do this, manipulate or seduce him into it. The question felt so wrong, Will couldn't even think about answering it. He wanted to go and do this, because the Hannibal from before the fall would have expected him to. Will stopped in his thoughts and wondered if Hannibal had expected this reaction from him. The idea made his head hurt.

"Will?"

"You shouldn't ask that," Will said unsure if he was being manipulated. "You wouldn't have before."

"I cannot be as I was before the fall and the time travel experiences and neither can you."

Will pressed his lips together and looked away. His fear had lessened, but he still felt uneasy.

“Can you do it?” Hannibal asked and to Will’s surprise that question was better, because of course he could and he wanted to say yes to Hannibal.

“I can,” he answered without hesitation. “But I’m not one for premeditated murder.”

“You killed people in your other timelines,” Hannibal said intrigued. “Of course, you chose to kill murderers. Did it help you live with the lack of remorse?”

Fuck you, Will thought. He sat up and glared at Hannibal. He had explained this before, Hannibal should know how he worked. Then Will was suddenly confused and unsure if he had explained to this Hannibal or if that talk had happened in another timeline.

“I felt the killers I profiled,” he hurried to say to hide his confusion. “But I feel the victims too. I can kill murderers, because I know the pain they caused. If I start killing randomly, it could…”

“Break you,” Hannibal interrupted. There was a hint of a smile on his face. “This is why I gave you this task. You can chose one that deserves killing in your eyes.”

The idea made Will even more afraid of having to choose.

“And if I don’t find one?”

“Then we can go to another city,” Hannibal said. “And if we don’t find someone there, we move again. But I wouldn’t worry too much, Will. I have known quite a few plastic surgeons in my life. From my experiences, I’m sure there is someone on this list, or even more than one, that deserves killing.”

They shared a look of understanding.

“Okay,” Will said.

“Thank you,” Hannibal replied.

Will didn’t start right away with it. He started preparing. Researching people online felt amateurish, but he no longer had access to the FBI's databases. At least none of the doctors seemed opposed to the new media and all had some kind of online presence. It was tiring to create one fake profile after the other to check them out though. His paranoid streak was also acting up. He would have preferred to switch location, online access or at least the laptop for each of the profiles, but that wasn’t possible. It would also be very unlikely someone would find out. Still, Will felt careless.

He ate lunch with Hannibal and suggested they get some burner phones. It led to him spending the afternoon exploring the city and buying burner phones at multiple locations. He was mentally and bodily exhausted when he came back. Mentally, because it had been loud

and smelly and too full of people and bodily because he wasn't as recovered as he had hoped.

Chiyoh was there when he got back, but he didn't see Hannibal. She was sitting at the dining table working on a laptop.

"Hey," he greeted her and placed the bags he was carrying on a chair.

"Hello," she said back at him as he walked into the kitchen and filled a glass of water. He also got some scissors and went to unpack his purchases.

They worked in silence. Will glanced at her writing notes in the margins of the printouts.

"Do you have a phone yet?" he asked after he had assembled the first.

Chiyoh looked up and shook her head in a slow movement. He pushed the phone to her saying: "It still needs to charge."

"Thank you," Chiyoh said.

Will started on the second phone. He could feel her watching him.

"Hannibal seems hesitant about visiting a doctor soon," she said, uncertain. Will looked up for a short moment and then back at the phone parts. He wasn't sure how much he could share with her. Hannibal didn't want her involved in the kill they planned. But she was here and she had looked after Hannibal for years.

"He is worried about the brand on his back being too recognizable," he said, deciding to stick as much to the truth as possible. "I suggested putting a bandage over it."

Out of the corner of his eye he saw her relax a little.

"Did he give you the cover story?" he asked. "For the doctors?"

"I'm pretending to be your… 'errand boy'," Chiyoh said and when Will looked up, he saw her smirk. He rolled his eyes at the teasing.

"As such, I'm not in need of a cover story," she added.

That was kind of stupid, Will thought. It was better when they all knew what roles everyone played.

"Victims of a gay bashing," he said. "Explains the wounds and any hesitation we might show."

Chiyoh nodded and Will finished setting up the second phone. He placed it on the side and started on the third.

"How many phones did you buy?", Chiyoh asked, curious.

“Eight,” Will answered. “In eight shops. I paid cash, moved around randomly and changed clothes once.”

He had let a shop clerk pick out an outfit for him. It had cost more than he’d liked, but he had chosen the shop because of the price range. Will Graham, the former FBI profiler living in a cabin in the woods wouldn’t have paid it.

“It looks different,” she said.

Will shrugged. “I’m trying to look my part.”

“He will like it.”

Will huffed amused. Hannibal would like it.

“Is he sleeping?”

She nodded, put away the laptop and the printouts and pulled over one of the boxes on her side of the table as he finished the third phone. Together they assembled the five remaining phones quickly. It took them a while to find plug sockets for all of them, but soon the phones were charging all over the living room.

“Life as a fugitive,” Will said half smiling.

“It looks easier on TV,” Chiyoh remarked dryly and they shared a look of understanding.

Will left for his and Hannibal’s room and found Hannibal sitting on the bed. He was wearing trousers, but no socks and was curling and uncurling his toes while reading one of the magazines Will had bought during transit. Will stopped in the doorway and leaned against it. Hannibal looked Will up and down, taking in the new outfit. Will smiled.

“You didn’t tell Chiyoh about the cover story,” he noted.

Hannibal concentrated his face and frowned.

“Oh,” he said after a moment and stared into the distance. “You are right, I did not.”

“Slipped your mind?” Will asked, frowning slightly as he walked up to the bed. He pulled his shoes off and sat down opposite Hannibal so they could look at each other.

“Yes,” Hannibal said seemingly distracted.

Are you depressed? Will wondered, but didn’t ask aloud. Instead he focused on Hannibal’s bare feet. He reached and touched the sole, it was soft and dry. Hannibal shivered when Will stroked from the heel to the toes.

“Do you want a foot rub?” he asked on impulse and looked up under his eyelashes to see Hannibal’s reaction.

Hannibal was watching him closely and answered: “You would soil your new clothes.”

“I could take them off,” Will offered. Waiting for the reaction was hard, but the answer was worth it.

“You should close the door first,” Hannibal agreed.

Will smiled widely, feeling the pull on the scar.

“We have some lotion in the bathroom,” Hannibal added.

“I will get it,” Will said and walked out and through the corridor. He feverishly hoped Chiyoh would stay in the living room until he was back in their bedroom. He didn’t want to explain carrying lotion through the corridor.

He got lucky and didn’t meet her. When Will came back into the bedroom he closed the door behind him. He threw the lotion on the bed and undressed down to his boxers before he settled on the bed in front of Hannibal’s feet.

Sitting there, Will suddenly remembered how he had done this for Molly. For a moment, he felt bad about remembering. Then he told himself that not everything they did could be unique to them. He pushed the memory aside and concentrated on Hannibal’s bare feet. He put some lotion on his hands and smoothed them over Hannibal’s skin. He heard Hannibal breathe in deeply. Hannibal had closed his eyes and was leaning back against the headboard.

“You have sensation in your feet?” Will asked.

“Yes,” Hannibal answered breathily. His face was… beautiful. Will rubbed, massaged and kneaded first one and then the other foot and watched Hannibal’s face. He seemed blissed out and it made Will ignore his cramping shoulder. Only when his hands started to hurt too did he stop. He realised he was vaguely aroused.

Will let go of Hannibal’s feet and crawled up to lie beside him. He placed an arm around Hannibal’s waist and found him warm and relaxed.

“Help me lie down?” Hannibal asked and Will got up again. Together, they maneuvered their bodies until they were lying beside each other. Will curled into Hannibal. He pushed his upper leg on top of Hannibal’s and his arms around Hannibal’s shoulder and chest.

“Tell me something?” Will requested. “About your last life. Doesn’t have to be something you aren’t ready to talk about, just share a little with me.”

Hannibal was quiet for a few breaths.

“I dislike cats,” he then said and Will snorted.

“Too much like yourself?” he asked with a lopsided grin.

“Possibly,” Hannibal answered, smiling.

They fell silent and Will listened to Hannibal’s breathing and the muted sounds of the city through the closed windows. Hannibal moved his arm and positioned it on Will’s hip, stroking over the skin just over the waistband of his boxers. Will pressed his face against Hannibal’s chest, cursing the shirt between them.

“Would you like me to do something about this?” Hannibal asked.

“Can you smell it?” Will asked with a grimace and without looking up.

“Yes.”

Will couldn’t decide. He wanted to have sex, but he didn’t just want to take and not give anything back. Hannibal was toying with the waistband; his fingers were slipping teasingly under it.

“I looked up how to have sex without an erection,” Will said. He was glad when Hannibal’s movements didn’t stop at the sentence. “I’m not really sure how to make you enjoy it.”

“I’m certain I will enjoy most of what you can think of, Will.”

Will sighed and sat up. He climbed over Hannibal and gently placed himself on his hips.

“See, that’s not working for me,” he said and leaned down. He placed his elbows beside Hannibal’s head and brought their faces close to each other.

“I told you everything, and I can live with you not telling me about your life with your sister for the moment. I know you didn’t do couples counselling, Doctor Lecter, but I’m pretty sure we need to communicate about other stuff, or this won’t work.”

“Other stuff like sex?” Hannibal asked with a raised eyebrow.

“Yeah,” Will answered. “I don’t want to accidentally hurt you and if you don’t tell me how you feel and what you want, I might.”

“What would you like to know?” Hannibal asked softly after thinking about Will’s request.

So many questions, Will thought. But he concentrated on the immediate ones.

“Am I too heavy?” he asked and moved his own hips a little bit.

“No.”

“And does this do anything?”

He was still moving his hips against Hannibal's in slow circles.

"I feel the pressure and your warmth," Hannibal said.

Will kissed him gently on his lips and nipped on the bottom one. Hannibal opened his mouth and they were kissing slowly.

"Kissing is better?" Will asked with a heavy voice when they separated.

"Yes," Hannibal said. He raised his head and stretched his throat. Will took it as an invitation and pressed an open-mouthed kiss against it. He felt Hannibal's pulse under his tongue as he licked over the soft skin. Will remembered Hannibal biting his neck in the first timeline and he let his mouth wander to the tendon between throat and shoulder. He nibbled gently on it and listened to Hannibal's breath speed up. That was a good reaction, he needed to look out for those.

"You are overdressed," Will said as he stopped at the collar of Hannibal's shirt. He lifted himself up, taking care to have most of his weight on his knees.

Together they got Hannibal naked. Will was actually less helpful than he had planned as he couldn't stop kissing and nibbling on Hannibal's skin whenever they got rid of another piece of clothing. It slowed him down too, which was good. He wanted to enjoy this and not rush through it.

Hannibal pulled him back on top when they were done and Will gave a lopsided grin at Hannibal's frown as he touched Will's shorts.

"I wanna keep them on for a bit longer," he said. "Helps me not to get too excited."

"Ah," Hannibal said understanding and slipped his hands under the fabric to squeeze Will's ass.

Will groaned.

"That doesn't help," he said, but that didn't stop Hannibal.

Instead, he bent down and licked over one of Hannibal's nipples. He got a sharp and audible inhale as reaction.

"Don't be silent please," he said, his breath hitting Hannibal's wet skin as he spoke. "I need to know what you like."

Without waiting for a response, he leaned down and sucked on the hardening nub. It took a few minutes of slow caress by hand and mouth until Hannibal got louder. Will rewarded him by using his nails and teeth. It got him even more vocal responses. Will grinned satisfied and ignored the pull on his scar.

Then he touched Hannibal everywhere and found out what he enjoyed and felt, and what was numb or insensitive. It was frustrating at some points, when Hannibal didn't react to something, but Will learned to work around it and used the sensitive spots to make Hannibal moan.

"Please, Will," Hannibal groaned and a quick look at the clock at the side table told Will he had been at it for a long time. His shoulder was rightly starting to hurt.

"Yes?" he asked with a husky voice. Hannibal was drenched in sweat, his face was flushed, his pupils blown and he had at some point gripped the pillow under his head with his hands.

"Please use my mouth," Hannibal begged. Will liked it. He hadn't gotten Hannibal hard, giving him what he wanted might be the kick he needed. After all, Hannibal liked to use his mouth.

Will got rid of his boxers and moved upwards. They arranged themselves. Will held on the headboard of the bed.

"Okay?" he asked. Hannibal nodded and opened his mouth. He looked wonderfully debauched and Will just wanted to fuck him. He made himself go slow. He wanted to ram it in, make Hannibal take it, but reason won out. Another time, when they were both okay and had discussed it before, he promised himself.

Hannibal's mouth was warm and wet and Will loved it. He closed his eyes, gripping the headboard and held still. Only when Hannibal took hold of his hips did Will start to move. He opened his eyes again and found Hannibal blissed out under him.

"Fuck," Will groaned. "You are so pretty like this."

He would have felt bad for his choice of words had Hannibal not moaned loudly.

"Oh, you like that," Will realized, watching Hannibal's face. Will dropped one hand to Hannibal's cheek and pushed his thumb in the mouth beside his cock.

"Like taking me in and hearing me talk about it."

Hannibal's eyes fluttered shut and he swallowed around Will's cock and thumb. Will pulled the thumb out and placed his hand beside Hannibal's head. He moved faster encouraged by Hannibal pulling him in and out with his hands on his hips.

"You want this, want me to be selfish," Will murmured breathing fast. His mind was working in overdrive. He couldn't not look and understand Hannibal in this moment. "Fuck you, kill with you, follow my urges no matter what."

Hannibal's nails dug into Will. The sharpness of the pain pushed Will closer to the edge. He stopped moving and pulled out. Hannibal protested with a wordless whimper and opened his eyes, pleading with Will.

“I’m doing what I want,” Will told him, taking his cock in his hand. “And what I want is to come on your face. Are you gonna let me?”

If Hannibal was shocked, only his blinking showed it.

“Yes,” he said with a hoarse voice and closed his eyes while he opened his mouth in invitation. It was tempting to use Hannibal’s mouth again, but Will was already so close. It took him only a few strokes until he came all over Hannibal’s face.

With shaking limbs and exhausted, Will watched Hannibal lick a pearly string of come from his lips without opening his eyes. Not being able to keep kneeling, Will lowered himself beside Hannibal, dislocating Hannibal’s hands from his hips as he moved.

“Did you… like it?” he asked. He thought Hannibal had enjoyed himself, but wanted confirmation.

“Very much,” Hannibal answered, turned to Will and opened his eyes. He looked obscene with Will’s come over his chin and cheeks.

“I… will get you a towel,” Will decided and pushed himself up with some effort.

“And a mirror please,” Hannibal added.

“A mirr…oh, you want to see.”

“Yes,” Hannibal answered and licked his lips again.

Will hurried away, feeling embarrassed about his own reaction. He put a robe on and hoped -again- he wouldn’t meet Chiyoh when he walked through the hallway to the bathroom. He got lucky -again- and came back with a warm and wet towel and the small shaving mirror from his kit.

Hannibal was sitting again, his back leaning against the headboard. Will gave him towel and mirror. He didn’t watch when Hannibal checked his face though. Instead he took off the robe and placed himself beside Hannibal.

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

We left Will and Hannibal in Brazil, ready to hunt down a plastic surgeon.

Please check out the art for this chapter by the lovely Adzusai. <3

Will didn't dare to look up, but he heard Hannibal wash his face. The possessiveness he felt after having come over Hannibal's face was a bit embarrassing. He would never have done this with Molly or any other partner he had had before. Hannibal had wanted it because he liked it when Will got greedy.

"I had a thought," Hannibal said calmly.

Will turned and saw that Hannibal's face was a little moist from the cloth.

"What thought?"

"About what we could do if we don't find a plastic surgeon."

"Okay," Will said, gesturing for Hannibal to continue.

"We could alter the brand ourselves."

Will blinked.

"By…?"

"You could cut the identifying parts off or alter them to your liking."

Blood, Will thought and saw red, even when he closed his eyes. He tried to push the picture away, but his mind wouldn't let him. Cutting into Hannibal, peeling off what Mason had left and replacing it with his own design. Fuck. Will was glad he had just come, it spared him the humiliation of getting hard from the idea.

"Will?" Hannibal asked.

"Give me a moment," Will said with closed eyes. He couldn't look at him, Hannibal would know.

Hannibal laughed softly and Will sighed, of course he got it without any eye contact. But he was laughing and Will had to see him. He stared at Hannibal's relaxed face and the wide smile. Hannibal looked mischievous. He always did when he was amused because Will was being honest. It was a good look on him and much better than the partial apathy he had shown since the fall.

"Shut up," he told him without any heat.

Hannibal kept smiling, but he didn't outright laugh anymore.

"I don't know if I could do that," Will said.

"You like hurting me."

"… a little. Hurting you a little," Will added. "Cutting layers of your skin off sounds a bit excessive. In any case, it wouldn't add up; your back injury would be older than the cuts."

Hannibal nodded silently and looked away. Will wondered if Hannibal had wanted to be marked by him. He didn't ask. He wasn't up to more revelations right now.

The evening and the following morning were filled with practicalities. Will and Chiyoh left the flat early the next day, both having to follow up on their assignments. Will was reminded of his days as a cop when he compared notes with Chiyoh in the evening. He liked strategizing with her and being her sounding board to help her find a neurosurgeon. She was unusually hesitant about asking how his search was going. Will thought it likely that she had guessed what the fate of the plastic surgeon would be and didn't want to be involved in it. He could respect that, but it created distance between them.

"What will you do when we are settled?" he asked her the next day when they were leaving the flat.

"I have not decided yet," she said calmly. As in the days before, she was wearing a light dress. He thought it suited her, but it also looked strange to him. In his mind, she was a hunter like Abigail. It did make her look non threatening and like a tourist. Will assumed it was a form of disguise.

"I might go back to Robert and Murasaki," she said. It sounded like she was unsure about the idea. "Or go somewhere else. I'm no longer bound."

Will didn't offer her any advice. For one, it didn't feel like he had the right, and he also had no clue what would suit her. For all the time they had spent together while caring for Hannibal in the last months, she was still a stranger to him, if not for his knowledge of her destructive potential. But he was happy to think that she would no longer be expected to run errands for Hannibal. Should Hannibal try to give her another job, he would have to talk him out of it.

Chiyoh found Hannibal a doctor and the rhythm of their life changed after Hannibal had his

first appointment. They had covered the scar on Hannibal's back as they had discussed. A plethora of tests followed on the days after the first appointment. Will spent most of them visiting and stalking plastic surgeons. Chiyoh accompanied Hannibal first to the tests and afterwards to the treatments. He was treated with injections for the moment. Appointments with a physiotherapist followed.

They mostly saw each other in the morning and in the evening. After some consideration of his non-existent Portuguese and local knowledge, Will had gone with a direct approach and made appointments with the doctors. He played a victim and made his facial scar the reason for his visits. He tried to see at least one doctor on the list every other day and quickly learned to use money to get appointments. Hannibal liked to see him dressed up in the morning. Will had to buy more expensive and outgoing clothes. Armoured in them, it got easier to play his part. The scar drew attention, but the clothes made people downplay any negative reactions they had.

Having to play someone he wasn't was hard, but it was harder to be open while meeting the doctors. He couldn't barricade himself from them. He had to let them in to get a read on them and it was exhausting. Most of the time when he came back home in the evenings, he could barely eat anything before wanting to sleep.

He wouldn't say their relationship suffered, but there was no time to talk about the other timelines. Will wondered if Hannibal had planned it like this to avoid opening up. He wasn't sure if he wanted to poke Hannibal about it. Hannibal being passive was worrisome, but with everything that was going on, Will wanted to give him more time before he pushed the matter.

To Will's surprise, he found a plastic surgeon who immediately offended him the moment he walked into the doctor's office on the third week of his search. The receptionist, dressed in minimal clothing, cowered before him when he introduced himself. He avoided her eyes to set her at ease.

His skin crawled when he met the surgeon himself. The man was very friendly, but Will saw suppressed disgust when he used their cover story of being the victim of a hate crime.

Of course, being a creep and an asshole wasn't really enough to get someone killed. Will split his time between visiting other plastic surgeons and stalking the offending doctor. He was rarely able to spend time at the flat during the day, apart from switching clothes and showering. He started to sleep on the couch because he didn't want to wake Hannibal when he arrived home late at night.

On his third night on the couch, Will woke to Hannibal petting his hair while sitting in the wheelchair.

"Hey," Will said with a rough voice.

"Hello Will," Hannibal answered. He looked sad.

“Have I upset you?” Hannibal asked.

“No…,” Will hurried to say. “I just didn’t want to wake you.”

“I would prefer being woken in the night to waking up without you.”

Oh, Will thought.

“Sorry,” he said sitting up. “I can do that.”

Hannibal watched him for a moment and then nodded.

“Please do,” he said and placed his hands on the wheels of the chair. “You need a haircut to even out the length.”

Will ran his hand through his hair. It had grown a good bit but was still partially patchy from when they had made him look like he’d had hair loss.

“Do you want to…”, Will started to ask, but then stopped himself because he suddenly felt unsure about asking. He shook the thought off. “Would you cut it for me?”

“With pleasure,” Hannibal answered. “Do you have some time after breakfast before you leave?”

“Yes. Yes, I have.”

Will found himself sitting on a small stool in the bathroom after breakfast and receiving another small lesson in Portuguese. Hannibal was behind him, working through his hair with fingers, comb and scissors.

“Is the reason that you have been away the last few evenings because that you have found a plastic surgeon?” Hannibal asked as he was cutting the hair on Will’s neck. Will rolled his eyes over the timing of the question.

“Yes,” he answered. “I have a feeling about one of them, but I can’t quite place it yet.”

“You can’t prove it?” Hannibal asked without emotion. Will felt bewildered by the lack of any pressure.

“No, I can’t, yet,” he said. He expected Hannibal to make him go for it without proof.

“Remember, there is still the option to alter the brand ourselves and get treatment afterwards. Enough money should ensure a certain time degree of silence.”

Frowning, Will just made a noncommittal sound and let Hannibal work on his hair.

“Are you…?” Will stopped himself before he could ask directly. “Some of your behavior is

puzzling me when I compare it to how you were before the fall."

Hannibal's hands slowed slightly, but he didn't stop.

"We are both not as we were before," he conceded.

"Before, I think you would have pushed me until I went the way you wanted me to."

"Possibly," Hannibal said.

"You seem more subdued now," Will tried again. "Could you… could you be depressed?"

Will had expected Hannibal to hesitate or stop, but he continued with his task as if he hadn't heard him. When the silence lasted too long, Will placed his hands on Hannibal's to stop the cutting and turned to look at him.

He didn't seem angry, although his face showed a curious expression.

"I'm considering it," Hannibal said and let his hands sink to his lap, the scissors shiny in his hand. "If I am, I have been for a long time in my previous life too."

"You are not that unaware of yourself," Will said frowning. "You would have known. You would know now."

Hannibal looked down at the scissors and the comb, avoiding Wills eyes. Will had a sudden insight about his reaction. It wasn't shame about being depressed, it was evasion.

"You stopped yourself thinking about everything that endangered the timeline you lived in," he guessed. "For a long time you told yourself you were content and didn't think about what was going on in your head. Now you don't know how to be anymore."

No protest followed and Will felt unexpected fear. He was used to Hannibal planning and scheming and protecting them. He didn't think Hannibal was up to that right now. He was disappointed and in the next moment he felt like an asshole for feeling that way. Hannibal wasn't as before, but neither was he.

That Hannibal didn't answer didn't calm Will one bit.

"Finish the haircut?" Will asked when it became clear Hannibal wouldn't say more on the matter without Will pushing him. He wasn't ready to push. Will turned, and after waiting for what felt like an eternity, Hannibal got back to work. The silence between them wasn't comfortable anymore.

Will was anxious when he left the flat for the day. His freshly cut and now more even hair was hidden under one of his new hats and he was wearing a reddish outfit Hannibal had bought for him. He was unfocused and way too early for his morning appointment. He found himself in a café with mismatched pottery and an abundance of little sponge cakes as food

choices. He ate two and the sugar settled his energy levels slightly. Unfortunately, he couldn't settle his mind and emotions. He kept remembering his conviction of going forwards through his deaths to get back to his Hannibal. He hadn't accepted earlier versions of Hannibal as a substitute. The realization that the Hannibal he was with now was not the one he had wanted to reach, was blooming within him.

Internally shaking, Will paid the waiter and went and booked a day ticket for one of the hop-on and hop-off tourist buses.

He is my Hannibal, Will told himself while a recording was played over the speakers of the bus. He ignored the voice as he ignored the other passengers. The sights of the city drifted by on the other side of the window as Will pondered over Hannibal and his own feelings, which were a mess. He tried to untangle them by looking at the different emotions separately, but he only knew that he was anxious, angry, disappointed and guilty. He couldn't figure out why he felt like he felt. Frustrated, Will got off at the next stop and pulled his hat further over his face. He didn't want to be recognised by the tourists around him. In retrospect, taking a tourist bus hadn't been his best idea. He relaxed after he had walked away from the masses of people and arrived in a small street with fewer people around who looked mostly like locals.

He walked until he found a little spot of green and sat down in the grass, leaning against a tree. The trousers of his outfit probably wouldn't make this without getting dirty, but he didn't care right now. Will placed his head between his legs and just breathed to calm down.

"Fear," he whispered. "Because the situation is so precarious and I can't change Hannibal's injuries."

He knew as he spoke that he meant the mental injuries as much as the physical ones. He wanted Hannibal well, but he couldn't just snap his fingers and have him back, healthy and self-assured.

"And I feel like an asshole for wanting that and not accepting him as he is now," he said quietly.

It's okay to feel bad and wanting everything to be better, it's human, Will told himself. His internal voice sounded a lot like Alana.

He couldn't change the situation, at least not quickly. Healing took time. He himself wasn't up to his old strength yet and Hannibal's physical injuries would take even longer to heal. If they were going to heal completely. No matter how Hannibal tried to make it look, Will wasn't entirely sure a full recovery was possible.

He lifted his head and saw with relief that nobody was nearby. He could hear the noise of the city but couldn't see anyone. It made him miss the woods and his dogs. He assumed it was telling that he didn't miss Walter or Molly. Hannibal was more important and consumed all of Will's attention.

He had always wanted that, to be the centre of Will's focus. Even now, with the ghosts of two Mischas haunting him, he wanted Will. Although he didn't obsess about Will with the same

fierce possessiveness as he had before their time travels.

“Time travel,” Will said, because he needed to say it out loud so the experiences stayed real. After he had said it, he looked around again to check nobody was watching. He was alone and time travel was real and had happened to him and Hannibal.

His phone beeped and reminded him of his upcoming appointment. He stared at the alarm and turned it off. He had no clue where he was. He knew he should turn on Google Maps and check if he could get there in time. The thought of checking out another surgeon and playing his role again was tiring. He didn’t want to. Instead he called the office and cancelled his appointment. His day was suddenly free of all commitments. Will asked himself what he wanted to do instead and smiled when his first thought was to go back to Hannibal.

It took him 40 minutes to arrive at their apartment via less conspicuous means than a tourist bus. He bought flowers at a market close to their flat. Hannibal was reading on the balcony when Will came in. He raised his eyebrows when he saw the flowers in Will’s hands.

“Yes,” Will said and rolled his eyes. “I feel guilty about something and got you flowers.”

“Did you adopt a dog?” Hannibal asked and placed the book he had been reading on the table.

Will huffed. “No. Is that the worst thing you could think of?”

He sat down opposite Hannibal and put the flowers beside the book. Smiling, Hannibal took the flowers and smelled them.

“Thank you, Will,” he said. “Would you put them in water for me?”

Grunting in affirmation, Will got up, took the flowers from Hannibal and fiddled in the kitchen until he found a vase. He cut the stems vertically and placed them in the vase, hoping it would look aesthetically pleasing. If not, he decided, Hannibal could fix it later.

“Thank you,” Hannibal said again when Will came back and positioned the vase on the table.

They sat in silence. Hannibal gave in first.

“You are missing your appointment?”

“I cancelled it,” Will confirmed. “Can I stay with you today?”

He wondered if he was developing separation anxiety. He should watch that.

“I have a physiotherapy appointment shortly,” Hannibal said. “You can accompany me if you wish.”

“I do wish,” Will hurried to say and felt Hannibal stare.

“Will you tell me why you feel guilty?”

Will sighed.

“Just stupid thoughts. Fears and doubts.”

“Do you want to talk about them?”

Will was suddenly reminded of Hannibal’s office in Baltimore. He smiled when he realized their current positions in two chairs opposite each other.

“Is this therapy, Doctor Lecter?” he asked, teasing as he waved between himself and Hannibal.

“I haven’t practised in a long time,” Hannibal replied smiling. “But should you need therapy, I can provide it.”

“You didn’t work as psychiatrist in your other life?” Will concluded loudly before he could stop himself. He expected Hannibal to shut down, but he surprised him.

“I was a general practitioner, actually.”

“That must have been tedious,” Will said frowning. He couldn’t imagine Hannibal looking after scraped knees or giving flu shots.

“We lived in a small town,” Hannibal explained and looked away from Will. “A GP was needed; a surgeon or a psychiatrist was not.”

Will wanted to ask him what kind of town, but Hannibal ended the conversation by announcing that he needed to get ready.

At Hannibal’s request, Will changed his trousers. As expected, his backside was a little greenish after sitting down on the grass. Instead he dressed in well fitting jeans that Hannibal must have acquired.

A special taxi collected them. The driver seemed surprised that Hannibal wasn’t alone. Will helped him to place Hannibal inside the car before he took his seat.

“I thought Chiyoh was helping you,” Will mentioned.

“My physiotherapist’s office has a handy taxi service,” Hannibal explained. “Using it gives Chiyoh more freedom.”

“Is she unhappy?” Will asked when the car started moving.

“Not necessarily,” Hannibal said. “But I believe she is getting impatient with the situation.”

“She wants her freedom,” Will said, remembering their talk.

“Yes, she made it clear to me that after we are independent she wishes to be free of further requests.”

“Will you give it to her?” Will asked.

Hannibal looked over to him.

“Yes,” he simply said. “I see no need to chain her further to me.”

Will let that sink in. It seemed fair to him, but part of him was wondering if it was another sign of Hannibal reacting out of character.

Hannibal’s physical therapist was a stocky woman with grayish hair. She involved Will from the moment he accompanied Hannibal into the room. He liked her and he felt that Hannibal had respect for her. Afterwards Hannibal went to get changed and she held Will back with a pointed look.

“I’m glad you have come,” she told him. “You are his partner, right?”

Will nodded, waiting for her to tell him what she wanted.

“He needs to start working with a walking frame,” she said. Will blinked. The idea of Hannibal using a walking frame was… preposterous.

“It would help?” he asked hesitantly.

“Yes,” she said nodding. “He is doing his exercises, that’s good, but he needs to start using his legs more regularly. He is otherwise very compliant, but he is deflecting when I suggest the frame.”

She seemed honestly worried about that. Will pressed his lips together. He had an idea why Hannibal reacted this way, a wheelchair was tough, but using a walking frame wouldn’t be dignified in Hannibal’s eyes.

“I will talk with him,” Will promised and she patted his arm.

“Good,” she said approvingly. “And he doesn’t let me massage his back. I would be fine with scars, but if he can’t let me see them, maybe you could give him some massages?”

“Um… I can try?” Will said. “I haven’t really…”

“We can show you. Come tomorrow and one of my colleagues can teach you.”

There wasn’t really anything Will could say to that apart from “Yes”. She patted his arm again.

“I’ll see you tomorrow then,” she said smiling satisfied.

“She has a very strong personality,” Will commented when they were on their way back to their flat.

“Yes,” Hannibal agreed with a small smile.

“She wants me to come back tomorrow to learn how to massage your back.”

Still smiling, Hannibal said: “That’s a good idea. Will you come?”

“I told her I would,” Will replied and focussed on Hannibal before he said, “She also wants you to use a walking frame.”

Hannibal froze.

“She has advised me to use one,” he confessed.

Will placed his hand on Hannibal’s knee.

“You could use it in the flat. If necessary, while Chiyoh and I are not there,” he suggested.

Will looked away but didn’t take his hand from Hannibal’s leg. He felt the tension in Hannibal’s body and he heard the too regular breathing.

“I will consider it,” Hannibal said after a few minutes and took Will’s hand in his. Will turned and smiled.

“Thank you,” he said. “I know that’s hard for you.”

Hannibal nodded once in acknowledgement.

The next day Will went with Hannibal again and as promised, he was whisked away for massage lessons. His teacher was a very young man who spoke English with a British accent. They started with a lesson in massage therapy and ended with Will getting his shoulder stretched and massaged because it froze during the lesson. He was released with an order to stretch more and the suggestion to come back every few days for some care.

Hannibal was waiting for him when he came out flushed and loose. He raised an eyebrow when he saw Wills appearance.

“Did you have a nice time?” he asked seemingly serious.

Will rolled his eyes.

“My shoulder gave me trouble and I got a massage,” he said. “And I learned a bit about how I

can help with your back."

"I look forward to it."

They went home and had lunch together. Will went to another appointment with a plastic surgeon in the late afternoon. He left it frustrated. He knew he should concentrate on the doctor that had triggered him, but he hadn't been able to dig up any more information in the last days. It was mostly due to his lack of Portuguese. He knew he had to use more aggressive methods of investigating, but he worried about being caught. He didn't want to lead the authorities to them by doing something rash. But he was running out of options. There were only two more names on the list Hannibal had given him and he couldn't expect to be handed the perfect victim on a plate.

Freshly showered, he joined Chiyoh and Hannibal for dinner. Hannibal had cooked and the whole setting reminded Will suddenly of the meals they had shared with Abigail. He felt melancholic when they cleaned up and went to bed early, not really ready for company. He didn't sleep well that night and he was sure he woke Hannibal a few times. Around 3 am, Will got up and made himself some tea which he drank on the balcony while listening to the nightly sounds of the city.

He needed to move, Will decided after an hour. Hannibal seemed content with slowly getting better, he felt no hurry, no drive. Will didn't want to let himself be lulled into that mind frame. He would go and break into his suspect's apartment. Hopefully he would find something. If he didn't, he would check out the remaining two doctors and then something could be done about the situation.

He made himself coffee around 5am and watched as the sunrise slowly woke up the city. His mind was starting to plan the break-in. He knew the opening hours of the doctor's office and it would be a good time frame to check out his home. As it was a few hours until then, Will decided to get ahead with their morning routine.

He prepared everything for breakfast. Fortunately, it didn't look like rain, so he could set up the table on the balcony. When he was done, he went and started his own stretching. The physiotherapist had been right, he hadn't done his exercises as regularly as he should have. Afterwards he felt loose and warm, it was nice. In his old life, he would have gone for a walk; here, he decided on a shower.

Dressed in only a towel and with his sleep wear in his hands, he went back into the bedroom. He found Hannibal lying awake in bed. He looked like he had just woken up.

"Hey," he greeted him.

"Will," Hannibal said and smiled a little.

He looks happy, Will thought and went to sit on the bed instead of getting dressed.

"Have you been awake long?"

“Didn’t you wake up when I got up?” Will asked curious. He didn’t expect Hannibal to be so unaware in his sleep.

“I felt you leave, but I didn’t check what time it was.”

Will nodded understanding. “I woke up and couldn’t get back to sleep again. In the end I got up to watch the sunrise,” he said and reached out to touch Hannibal’s waist.

“Was it a nice sunrise?” Hannibal asked.

Will didn’t think anyone had ever asked him that. For a moment he felt the urge to say something dramatic and romantic, like it would have been better had they watched it together, but he stopped himself. It felt too ordinary. Hannibal’s idea of romance involved folding a human body into an origami heart.

“It was,” Will said and remembered how pleased Hannibal had been about the flowers. Maybe a little bit of ordinary romance was okay. “I can wake you the next time, if you want me to.”

“I would like that.”

Will smiled and leaned in to press a closed mouthed kiss on Hannibal’s lips. He hadn’t intended to do anything else, but Hannibal wrapped him in his arms and pulled Will on top of him. Still sitting on the bed, it felt awkward and Will moved without thinking until he was lying flat on top of Hannibal. He moved around until his elbows were beside Hannibal’s head and his legs on either side of Hannibal’s.

“Am I too heavy?” he asked and then cleared his throat. He was pushing himself up a little on his knees and elbows.

Hannibal shook his head. “I like feeling your weight.”

Will licked his lips and took a deep breath.

“Well, anytime you need me to squish you, just let me know,” he said jokingly and pressed his face in Hannibal’s neck, placing more of his weight on Hannibal’s upper half. He was rewarded by Hannibal stroking his back. Will’s skin was still a little moist from the shower and Hannibal’s hands were dry and a little rough. It made Will shudder and he felt some low-level arousal. He made himself ignore the feeling and tried not to move against Hannibal. That changed when Hannibal’s hands slipped lower and he started toying with the towel around Will’s waist. He groaned when Hannibal loosened the towel and grabbed his ass with both hands.

“Don’t start anything we can’t finish,” Will warned and Hannibal froze.

“Does it bother you that I can’t…”

“No,” Will interrupted him quickly. “I meant timewise. I prepared breakfast and Chiyoh will

be up soon."

"Ah," he said and Will felt Hannibal relax underneath him.

"And I don't mind," Will hurried to add. "But maybe we could talk about what's possible and what's not at some point so I don't just fumble around."

"So far you have 'fumbled' very well," Hannibal remarked and squeezed Will's ass again. "But we can discuss our options, maybe over dinner tomorrow evening? Chiyoh mentioned that she will be going to a play tomorrow night."

"Okay," Will said with a sigh. He got up and dressed. He could feel Hannibal's gaze from behind. It made his skin oversensitive.

Soon they heard Chiyoh move around outside their room and Will helped Hannibal to get ready for the day to speed things up.

"Have you considered the walking frame?" Will asked gently.

"One will be delivered today or tomorrow," Hannibal answered without making eye contact.

"Oh, good," Will said and squeezed Hannibal's shoulder once.

They had breakfast and Will learned a few more words of Portuguese. Chiyoh was obviously more talented with languages and excused herself after learning the new words.

Afterwards, Hannibal asked Will if he would join him for his physiotherapy again as they washed the dishes in the kitchen, but Will declined.

"More appointments?" Hannibal asked.

Will nearly lied and said yes. It confused him. There was no reason to lie. Hannibal could know about his plans and Chiyoh wasn't nearby as she was getting ready for the day. Maybe he hadn't gotten over the habit from his time jumps yet.

"I'm scouting out a potential doctor's home," he said truthfully.

"May I ask who has piqued your interest?"

For a short moment Will hesitated.

"Dr. Rapoza," he then answered.

Will left shortly after and was soon stood in the shade of some trees near Dr. Rapoza's house watching the doctor leave for work. He waited two more hours until more of the occupants of the surrounding houses had left for work or school as well before he went closer. He knew from his previous research into the doctor that he had no family and therefore risked a direct

approach to check the conditions.

There was no visible alarm system and generally the house didn't look well maintained. When Will snuck into the overgrown back garden, he was caught by surprise. One of the windows on the first floor was open. He hid in the bushes for another hour to ensure nobody else was in the house. When he didn't hear or see anything he decided to go for it and check out the inside of the house. He shot Hannibal a quick text before he went in. Climbing up the wall was pretty rough on his shoulder, but he made it quickly.

He stayed quiet after he pulled himself through the window and went on a quick search from top to bottom to ensure nobody else was home and there was no surveillance. After he was sure that he was alone he started a more thorough search. He didn't find anything discriminating.

Will had known that a basement with butchers equipment was unlikely, yet he had hoped to find something. But Dr. Rapoza's home didn't give him anything. There was some porn, but nothing illegal, and he had poor taste in books. Unfortunately for Will, that didn't deserve a death sentence. At least not in his world. When he thought about killing, his mind wandered to Bedelia and Frederick. He felt like he owed them a death after having already killed them in another timeline. Rapoza didn't seem to deserve killing. Sighing, Will left the same way he had come in and took his time to get home. It was late in the afternoon and it had become quite warm. The sun was bright and he wished he had brought a hat with him.

When he stepped into the flat he could hear Chiyoh and Hannibal talking in Japanese on the balcony. He called that he was back and went to take another shower. When he came out the wetness of his skin reminded him of their little interlude on the bed that morning. He dressed in jeans and a close-fitting white shirt. He hoped Hannibal would like it. He was avoiding talking about his life in the other timeline and his passivity was worrisome. Sex was something he seemed to actively seek. Will felt like he should encourage it. And it wasn't a hardship for him either.

He went to join Hannibal and Chiyoh on the balcony after getting himself a glass of iced water. He felt like he should ask how everyone's day had gone, but it felt too domestic and normal. He couldn't very well tell them about stalking a plastic surgeon as a potential murder victim in return. At least not while Chiyoh was here.

"Chiyoh would like to leave the city for a few days and spend some time in Guaruja," Hannibal said. He was watching Will; his gaze moving appreciatively up and down.

Will was happy that he had chosen his clothes well. He looked at Chiyoh after Hannibal had spoken. She hadn't had a lot to do recently apart from sometimes going with Hannibal to physiotherapy. He could easily do that in future.

"Sounds like a good idea," he said. "We don't have to stay cooped up with each other the whole time."

That seemed to relax her almost imperceptibly and they soon discussed when she planned to leave and if anything needed to be done before she went. It was still weirdly domestic.

Chiyoh left two days later. Will had spent those days meeting with the remaining doctors on the list and accompanying Hannibal to his physio. He hadn't gotten further in finding an expendable plastic surgeon and he knew he had to tell Hannibal. He kept putting it off until Chiyoh had left. It was Sunday and they hadn't any appointments. They still did their exercises in the living room with the yoga mats they had bought a while back.

"Something is on your mind?" Hannibal asked afterwards. Will was just about to offer him a massage. The question made Will stop getting up.

"Yes," he said and slumped back down. Hannibal was sitting on the mat opposite him and was massaging his legs. "I checked all the doctors on the list. None of them seem to be really bad people. There is one I dislike but he…"

"Doesn't deserve to die for it", Hannibal finished. He didn't sound surprised. Hannibal's face was neutral and Will couldn't get any feedback from him.

"Am I disappointing you?" Will asked frowning.

"No," Hannibal said warmly. "I have been expecting this for a few days. You have not been subtle in your avoidance."

"So you had time to get used to the news," Will noted. "Doesn't mean you are happy about it."

"My physiotherapy is bringing results and the injections have helped," Hannibal said.

Will frowned further. "Does that mean you won't need a plastic surgeon?"

If this had been a fool's errand and he had wasted his time in the last weeks, he would get really annoyed.

"An operation for my back has been suggested by my doctor," Hannibal replied. It made Will suddenly feel guilty for not providing the solution. Seeing that Hannibal was calm about his failure made him angry.

"Why are you not pushing me on this, Hannibal?" he asked exasperated and got up to kneel on his mat.

"Would you like me to make you kill someone?" Hannibal asked too calmly. "In the months following the death, you would slowly drift away from me, because the guilt would eat you up."

"Would I?" Will asked without thinking and held his breath.

Hannibal focussed on him.

"Wouldn't you?" he asked.

“I don’t know,” Will said. He felt shaky at the realization that maybe he wouldn’t care. Especially if it meant Hannibal would get better. He tried to get up. He wanted to go away and bring distance between them. Hannibal grabbed his hand and pulled him closer, they went down in a tussle, Will trying to get away and Hannibal grabbing hold of him.

“Will!” Hannibal said, trying to get him to focus.

He struggled in Hannibal’s grip, but didn’t try too hard to break away.

“Will,” Hannibal repeated gently and pressed his mouth against Will’s forehead.

“He is an asshole,” Will said pressed. “I don’t fucking care about him.”

Will’s mind was racing. He hated this, hated understanding what he was capable of and he hated and loved Hannibal for not encouraging him.

“I don’t mind,” Hannibal told him in a low voice. His arms were around Will’s upper body, holding him in place with a strong grip.

“You should!” Will shouted angrily. He pulled his head back and smashed it forward against Hannibal’s chin without thinking. It hurt and Hannibal gasped in pain yet didn’t let him go. Will pushed against him until he could see Hannibal’s face. His lip was split and blood was dripping down his chin.

“Sorry,” he said and stopped his struggling. The fight left him as quickly as he had become enraged. He hadn’t wanted to hurt Hannibal. Will leaned forward in the same moment as Hannibal licked over his lips to clean them off the blood. He licked over Hannibal’s chin and then they were kissing, sharing the taste of blood. Will moaned at the contact, trying to get closer to Hannibal like he had previously tried to get away.

They pulled at their clothes, frantically trying to get rid of them altogether while kissing each other. When Will pulled back to help Hannibal with his pants and underwear, he saw that blood was smeared around Hannibal’s mouth and couldn’t help but growl. For a moment, he was reminded of their dance on the cliff and the pureness of it. He pulled down Hannibal’s pants and when they were off he stroked possessively over Hannibal’s flanks. It caused a shudder to go through Hannibal’s body.

To Will’s delight, he found Hannibal half hard when they pulled off his underwear. He leaned forward and licked over it before he took him in his mouth. He didn’t get much harder. Still, Hannibal was enjoying it, going by the sounds he made. He was moaning and whimpering and Will loved hearing it.

“Please stop,” Hannibal begged at some point and pulled on Will’s short hair. Will let go of him and looked up.

“Can I fuck you?” he asked, his own cock hard between his legs.

“Yes,” Hannibal answered without hesitation.

“Do we have…?” Will started but got interrupted when Hannibal spoke at the same time: “We have lubricant in the bathroom.”

“Where?” Will asked as he got up.

“Red toiletry bag on my side,” Hannibal answered. He was lying naked on the mats, looking debauched and a bit helpless with his split lip and his still legs. It was hard for Will to leave him alone. He hurried to the bathroom, his cock bobbing up and down as he moved. He found the lube and condoms and took them back with him.

Hannibal had taken some pillows from the couch and placed them under his stomach. His ass was up in the air. Another time, Will would have loved it. Today, he didn’t.

“No, no, no,…” he said quietly and let the lube and condoms fall on the mat before he bent down and pulled Hannibal onto his back. He moved with Will, but his gaze was confused.

“I want to see you,” Will told him and caused a flush on Hannibal’s face.

“I won’t be able to hold up my legs,” Hannibal noted.

“Would your back be okay?” Will asked having an idea. He was rummaging in their discarded clothing.

“Yes, if we use some pillows as props,” Hannibal answered frowning.

Will had found his t-shirt and ripped it. He then took Hannibal’s legs on his lap and started to bind his ankles together.

“Oh,” Hannibal said and Will saw his half hard cock twitch. Will smirked slightly until Hannibal said “Stop”.

His hands froze and he looked up to find Hannibal looking flushed and his pupils dilated.

“Put me on the table,” Hannibal requested sounding rough. “The angle will be better for my back and you will be able to…”

“Fuck you harder,” Will realized aloud. He loosened the bindings and together they moved to the dining table. Hannibal held his legs up as Will went back to get the bindings, lube, condoms and a cushion for Hannibal’s head.

“I like this,” he said when Hannibal’s bound ankles where looped over his neck and his stomach and cock where flush against Hannibal’s legs and ass. He didn’t have as much flexibility as the last time he had fucked Hannibal in another timeline, but he liked the tightness and the fact that Hannibal was at his mercy.

“Then please continue,” Hannibal answered sounding a little desperate.

Will prepared him, using lube and his finger. He tried to get Hannibal's legs to spread a little and ended up leaning forward to kiss Hannibal, while letting his ankles slip partially over his shoulders. He was able to penetrate him deeper like this. Hannibal seemed to like it, he had closed his eyes and was making very appreciative moans whenever Will hit the right spot.

"You look good like this," Will said and pressed his hand against Hannibal's stomach, holding him down as he fucked him. Hannibal didn't answer in words. The pleasure was written all over his face and in his moans and gasps. It was slightly confusing that he wasn't fully hard, but his obvious enjoyment made Will ignore it.

"You really like this," he said in wide-eyed wonder as he came closer to his orgasm. "Can you orgasm like this?"

"Possibly," Hannibal answered groaning, his eyes had rolled upwards and seeing him so loose and uninhibited made Will come. For a second, he just kept fucking Hannibal. When he got too sensitive, he stopped, breathing harshly. He looked apologetically down at Hannibal, who was definitely on the edge.

"Sorry," he said pulling out. He took the lube and coated two fingers, pushing them in without giving Hannibal a break.

"Come on Hannibal," he urged him while he worked his fingers in and out. "Let go, you want to. Just enjoy, don't think."

It didn't work, Will could see it. Hannibal was still close, but not close enough. Will reached out with his free hand, took Hannibal's left nipple between his fingers and twisted.

Hannibal shouted, a shudder ran through him and Will felt his legs twitch with little force. He moaned a few times until he calmed down. He looked wrecked and more relaxed and open than he had in weeks. Will made himself ignore his own drowsiness and untied Hannibal's legs. He checked his ankles; they weren't bruised.

"Can you sit up?" Will asked. Hannibal opened his eyes and nodded. Will helped him up and they gazed at each other.

"Bed?" Will asked smiling.

"I wouldn't mind a nap," Hannibal answered, sounding exhausted.

"Can you sit upright if I get the chair?" Will asked. Hannibal nodded and propped himself up with his arms.

Will took the condom off and tied it closed as he got the wheelchair. Naked, he helped Hannibal down from the table and into the wheelchair. They moved to the bedroom.

"Clean the living room please," Hannibal told him. Will wanted to protest, but this was the first order Hannibal had given him in a long time and he decided to follow it.

Still naked, Will went back and tidied up. To be fair, it was rather messy. He even had to wipe the mats and the table.

“It’s all nice and clean now,” he said as he joined Hannibal in bed.

“We aren’t,” Hannibal said. He sounded exhausted but not particularly tired.

“I can live with that,” Will said and couldn’t help but rub a hand over Hannibal’s ass. He wanted to slip his fingers into him again. He placed an arm around Hannibal’s waist instead and pulled him closer.

Possessive much?, he thought and pressed his face into the nape of Hannibal’s neck.

They dozed until Will got restless. He went to the kitchen and brought Hannibal an ice pack for his split lip. It was swollen and the skin under it was flushed.

“Sorry about the headbutt.”

Hannibal, who was lying down with the ice pack pressed against his bottom lip, sighed. Will was sitting naked beside him, one hand placed on Hannibal’s hip.

“Should I apologize for not pushing you into killing?”

“I don’t know,” Will said and sighed too.

“The outcome of our little domestic was quite satisfying.”

“Yes, the sex was good,” Will said drily. “There is some stuff we need to talk about, though.”

Will waited and just when he thought Hannibal would avoid the discussion again, he started speaking.

“I know,” Hannibal said. “Can you ask me some questions?”

Of course, Will thought and wondered what questions he should ask. He wanted to understand what had changed Hannibal. Why he was so passive for example?

“I liked it when you told me to clean up the living room,” Will said. “You rarely tell me to do something now. Before… before you were pushing and pulling me wherever you wanted me. Why do you think you aren’t anymore?”

“I refrained from manipulating my environment for decades. I assume… I’m out of practice.”

“Hm…,” Will had guessed as much. Confirmation from Hannibal was nice. He took a moment to think. He had so many questions, but he wanted to ask the right ones.

“Can your legs heal completely?”

“A 100% percent recovery is unlikely, but I have made progress. I believe I will be able to walk again, possibly with aides. It is, however, not certain that I will regain all sensation. The nerves got damaged and it is unclear if they will completely recover.”

“Hmm…” Will looked at Hannibal’s upper body. Hannibal was watching him. “Is the nerve damage the reason you don’t get hard?”

“Yes,” Hannibal answered. Will could see he wanted to ask something and waited patiently.

“From your account of the other timelines you seemed to have enjoyed intercourse with my past self,” Hannibal finally said, lowering the ice pack from his face.

“I liked you fucking me,” Will said and narrowed his eyes. “If I miss it, we can buy something you can use. Would you like that?”

“You would want me to…” Hannibal started.

Will leaned down, lowered his eyelids and said: “Fuck me with a dildo or a vibrator. Imagine it, you could keep me on edge for an eternity.”

Hannibal’s mouth opened and his eyes widened.

“Oh, you like that idea,” Will said and licked his lips. “We will have to do that. Is plastic okay? I saw some sex shops when I was checking out the surgeons. Not sure if they have high class stuff, though.”

Will watched in delight when Hannibal became noticeably excited as he spoke. He didn’t reply and Will couldn’t help but smirk.

“I will buy something and bring it home for you,” he said decisively.

“I have visited sex shops before,” Hannibal said a bit miffed and licked his lips, flinching when his tongue touched the split. Will put Hannibal’s hand with the ice pack back onto his face. For a moment he imagined prim and proper Doctor Lecter in his three piece suits in a sex shop. It made him want to get Hannibal in one of those suits and cut if off while he was still wearing it.

Will leaned forward and kissed Hannibal’s chest instead of fantasizing about scissors.

“Will you kill Bedelia with me?” he asked as he lifted himself up, watching Hannibal’s face as he did. Shock changed to intrigue as Will watched him. Hannibal hadn’t expected the question. “Because I really want to kill her for screwing us over.”

He waited for Hannibal’s answer. As none came, he narrowed his eyes.

“The answer to that is ‘yes’, Hannibal,” he said sharply.

“Is it?” Hannibal asked, tilting his head to look at Will, letting the ice pack sink onto the mattress.

“Yes, unless she is more important than me.”

“She isn’t,” Hannibal said without hesitation. “Are you jealous?”

“You sound like that’s an unbelievable concept,” Will said and suppressed a snort. “You ran away with her and one of your past versions killed me because I had killed her.”

“You don’t have to worry about her,” Hannibal promised. “She is far from my mind, has been for many decades.”

“Good,” Will said flippantly. “Prove it by killing her with me.”

It was a bit crazy making such a demand and Will was worried about pushing too hard. But maybe if he pushed long enough, Hannibal would push back. Until then, they might have some fun together.

“If you really wish for that…,” Hannibal said, giving in. “I will help.”

“Great,” Will said, feeling giddy from the concession. “You can think about how to cook her.”

“Have you hurt your head?” Hannibal asked.

Will laughed.

“That’s the dumbest question you ever asked me.”

Unamused and frowning, Hannibal pushed the arm Will was leaning on away. He might have wanted to sit up. Will didn’t give a shit in that moment. He stayed as he was, looming over Hannibal, watching for a reaction. He needed to know how far he could push.

“Get off Will,” Hannibal requested.

“Make me,” Will said without taking his eyes off Hannibal’s face.

Next he knew, Hannibal had gripped his wrist and was trying to push him away. Will stayed put and then they were struggling, each trying to get the upper hand. He thought he had the advantage, being the one that was sitting up, but when Hannibal abruptly gripped his throat, Will had only a few seconds before his vision started to blur.

There you are, Will thought as he collapsed to the side.

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Will was a bit out of breath at the end of the last chapter.

Please check out the art for this chapter by the wonderful damalisca. <3

Will blacked out and when he woke up, his head was lying on Hannibal's lap. Will smiled up at him. He felt like the real Hannibal had just come out to play. The face above him was apologetic.

"Don't say you are sorry," Will said. Surprisingly, his voice wasn't affected. Hannibal must have pressed on his arteries instead of strangling him. It also explained the quickness with which he had gone down.

"I attacked you first," Will added as Hannibal didn't immediately react.

"Will you be this way from now on? Pushing me until I hu… push back?" Hannibal asked.

"Possibly," Will answered, still smiling.

Hannibal sighed annoyed.

The honeymoon was over, Will thought and got up. All things considered, he felt very energetic. Hannibal had shown some teeth and he loved it.

"Want to make lunch?" Will asked smiling satisfied.

Hannibal nodded. They got up and it quickly became clear that they were still a mess from earlier. They took separate showers and got dressed. Will showered last and found Hannibal in the kitchen chopping peppers afterwards. A look at the clock told him it was already early afternoon.

"Are we missing your physio?" he asked frowning.

"I called and cancelled for today," Hannibal said and pointed at another cutting board. "Can you cut the potatoes into thin slices please?"

"Cheat day," Will commented. "Nice."

He went to the cutting board and started on the potatoes. He still wanted to poke at Hannibal now that he had opened up a little. It probably wasn't a good idea when Hannibal had a knife in his hand, but Will didn't care.

"Did you ever meet Bedelia in your other life?" he asked and watched Hannibal out of the corner of his eyes. He might be mistaken, but it sounded like the next cut that hit the board was harder than the ones before.

"I didn't seek anyone out from this life," Hannibal answered after a moment. He kept his eyes on his work, his face showed no reaction. "We stayed in Europe for most of our lives."

"Germany," Will guessed as he remembered Hannibal's ability to communicate in German.

"At first," Hannibal confirmed. "Later, we moved to warmer countries. Mischa disliked the cold."

Will considered what he should ask now. If he should ask any questions. Invoking Mischa's name invited respect.

"Germany's climate reminded her of home and the attack," Hannibal continued. "We tried to make her comfortable in all things. Moving to a country with a warmer climate helped her to avoid nightmares."

Something tickled Will after hearing the words. It didn't sound quite right. She sounded like a child, but the drawing of her had been that of an adult. Instead of asking Hannibal, he let the pendulum swing. He stopped chopping the potatoes when he came to a conclusion.

"Where you her primary caregiver?" he asked and turned to Hannibal. He continued to concentrate on the chopping board below, like Will he had stopped chopping.

"For the most time, yes. In the beginning Robert and Murasaki did most of the work. When they got older, I took over the responsibility."

"How…how did the attack affect her?" Will asked carefully.

Hannibal was silent for a long time as he restarted chopping the peppers. The slices were uneven, the pieces looked irregular.

"Her body grew, her mind did not," he finally said. Carefully, Hannibal placed the knife beside his cutting board and looked at Will who tried to keep his face neutral.

Will didn't know yet what he felt about this revelation. He knew with sudden clarity why Hannibal hadn't left the timeline. He hadn't been able to abandon her.

"It was caused by the mental and physical trauma of the attack," Hannibal added.

"Was Chiyoh with her when you…?" Will asked. "Or someone else?"

“Yes,” Hannibal answered smiling. “She wasn’t… isn’t alone.”

“You miss her,” Will guessed.

“Very much.”

It hurt, Will thought. It hurt to think of it. Hannibal was gone for her and would never come back. He let the potatoes be, walked to Hannibal and kneeled in front of him, taking his hands in his and kissing the knuckles.

“I’m sorry for your loss,” Will said in a rough voice.

The doorbell rang and Will nearly jumped. He hadn’t heard it before and the tone was very loud.

“The walking frame,” Hannibal said after a second of perplexed silence between them.

Will laughed uncomfortably and got up.

“I… I’ll get it,” he said. He left, feeling like he should stay, and buzzed the delivery into the house. It was indeed the walking frame. It was fully assembled, they had paid extra for it to be. He gave the delivery man a tip which he hoped was a good one. He was still unsure about the value of money in Brazil. It was partially due to the different currency and partially due to the larger amount of money he had available.

He left the frame in the corridor and went back to the kitchen. Hannibal was putting the vegetables into a baking dish and ignored Will’s entrance. It felt like he was trying to distance himself. Will couldn’t have that. He walked up behind his back, bent down and hugged Hannibal’s upper body around the wheelchair’s back.

“Don’t go away,” he said against Hannibal’s ear, repeating what Hannibal had told him so often. “Stay with me.”

Hannibal’s shoulders slumped down, his body tense, and Will hugged him harder. They didn’t speak until Hannibal relaxed and placed his wet hands over Will’s.

“I will try,” he promised. “You might have to remind me sometimes.”

“I can do that,” Will said with conviction.

They finished cooking in content silence and ate on the balcony, listening to a radio channel with classical music Hannibal had found and working on Will’s Portuguese.

Their next move had to be somewhere where they spoke English or French or Spanish. He wanted to fit in better.

“Would you like to go to a concert or something?”, he asked, partially to distract from the

lesson which frustrated him. Hannibal's expression made it very clear that he knew what Will was doing.

"I would like it, but it might be too conspicuous," he answered, pretending not to care.

If he had stayed in a smaller town with Mischa, he couldn't have had as much culture as in his original past, Will thought.

"We can't live like we are constantly under threat," Will said frowning. "Why don't you have a look to see what interests you and we can try to get in. Maybe for an afternoon or morning performance with less people?"

He remembered having been dragged to morning performances in theaters during his school days. He had always left with headaches and the valiant wish for weeks of solitude to recover. Not because of the performances, but because of his noisy peers.

"I will look into it," Hannibal said. He didn't promise, but didn't sound evasive either.

They ended up in bed later, having concluded that the couch was too small for them together. They stayed dressed, but were pressed close and occasionally kissed.

"I thought about your offer," Hannibal said at some point. His lips were bruised from kissing but the split was healing.

"Which offer?" Will asked.

"To buy - How did you phrase it? – a dildo or vibrator," Hannibal replied.

For a moment, Will had to press his face against Hannibal's throat to calm himself.

"Okay," he said after raising his head again. "What are your ideas for it?"

"I don't have a preference in material, although glass can be very nice with its ability to hold different temperatures," Hannibal mused while looking up at the ceiling. His left hand was in Will's hair, gently stroking.

"Okay," Will said and placed his chin on Hannibal's chest. Some hair stuck out through the fabric of the thin shirt Hannibal was wearing. Will found it charming. "I will go and find something."

But not today, he didn't want to leave Hannibal today. Right now, he just wanted to stay close and preferably have sex again in a few hours.

Will's wish was fulfilled during the day as they mostly stayed in bed, kissing and dozing. In the evening they ate a light meal on the balcony and when they returned to the bed, Hannibal got him off with his mouth and hands. Feeling guilty about not reciprocating and not wanting

to second guess himself, Will asked Hannibal if he should make him come again. He declined with a relaxed smile and it soothed Will's conscience that Hannibal seemed satisfied.

Morning came with heavy rain and dark skies. It was a perfect day to stay inside, but Hannibal insisted on returning to his physiotherapy. After Hannibal left, Will tried to get some more sleep. It was futile. He was too restless. He got up and wandered through the flat. When it became boring, he sat down and called Dr. Rapoza's office to make another appointment. He hadn't thought about it since their fight, but he remembered his conviction; his willingness to kill the man for Hannibal. He would have to talk with Hannibal about the logistics of the operation.

Still bored, Will went online and looked at the cultural offerings of São Paulo. It soon became clear that he was out of his depth when it came to choosing entertainment for Hannibal. He would remind Hannibal when he came back. What he could do was book a table at a restaurant nearby. They had eaten exclusively in the flat since they arrived. The restaurant had good reviews online and was wheelchair accessible. Will guessed that it wasn't quite up to Hannibal's standards as he could get a table for the next evening, but they had to start somewhere. If Hannibal didn't like it, Will would just tell him to choose the next one.

Feeling good from being more active, Will decided to go for a walk despite the rain. It would give him some exercise and Hannibal would have time alone with the walking frame. He sent a text message to Hannibal, and left, taking an umbrella with him.

He walked around aimlessly. Part of him was looking out for a sex shop, but they didn't live in the right sort of area. He did find a corner food shop with high class ingredients and bought some cheeses and little bottles of oil. The prices were exorbitant, but he was relaxed about paying them. Hannibal's money was spoiling him. Still, it was nice not to have to worry about finances.

He drifted through the shops. He stayed longer when the shopkeepers left him alone and left quickly when they tried to sell him stuff. When he was left alone he bought some books, a tie he thought Hannibal might like, and more flowers.

When he came back to the flat it was clear that the walking frame had been moved, yet, he couldn't see or hear Hannibal. A look through the open bedroom door showed that he was sleeping in bed. Whatever exercises his physiotherapy had involved, it must have been stressful. Will left him alone and unpacked and stored his shopping. He arranged the flowers in a vase and carried them into the bedroom to place them on Hannibal's night stand.

Hannibal blinked awake as Will sat down beside him on the bed. He looked soft and pliant. Will couldn't help it, he leaned down and stole a deep kiss.

"Hello Will," Hannibal said when Will let go. His cheeks were flushed and he still looked tired.

“Hey,” Will said and licked his lips. “Did you have lunch yet?”

“I didn’t,” Hannibal answered. His nostrils flared and his eyes found the flowers.

“Are you feeling guilty again, Will?”

“No,” Will said smiling. “Just happy.”

And horny, but he didn’t say that.

They had a salad for lunch. Hannibal used some oil from Will’s shopping trip as dressing. It was still raining lightly and they stayed inside instead of using the balcony.

“I made a second appointment with Dr. Rapoza,” Will said as they had finished eating.

Hannibal looked surprised.

“I thought you hadn’t found a suitable candidate.”

Will shrugged, unable to explain that while Rapoza might not be evil, he didn’t care if he had to kill the man.

“What do we need from him?” Will asked instead of answering Hannibal’s question.

For a moment, Will thought Hannibal wouldn’t answer.

“The scarring is too heavy for laser therapy. To make the seal less recognizable, part of it will need to be cut out.”

“The name,” Will said, not wanting to voice Mason’s surname.

“The name,” Hannibal confirmed. “The recovery will take some time and it will be a set back for the physiotherapy as I won’t be able to do all the necessary exercises for the first weeks.”

That sucked, Will thought.

“Should we move?” Will asked as he pondered over the logistics. “It would look weird for your current doctor when you interrupt your recovery for something that will look cosmetic, won’t it?”

“Moving could make us less conspicuous,” Hannibal agreed.

“We could put Chiyoh onto that,” Will said thinking out loud. It would get her out of the way for the murder too. “And afterwards you should send her away, Hannibal.”

He blinked at Will and frowned.

“She is waiting for you to let her go,” Will explained. “From her perspective, you have jailed her twice. Once with her prisoner in Lithuania and again when you asked her to watch over you.”

Understanding dawned on Hannibal’s face and Will suddenly understood that it was difficult for Hannibal to separate the Chiyoh of now from the woman that was still looking after Mischa in another timeline. Hannibal had lived another life without him, Will reminded himself. He waited for the anger to resurface, but it was much weaker now. Understanding Hannibal and his decision to stay with Mischa was softening Will’s stance.

“You have a point,” Hannibal said. “I will speak with her when she returns.”

“Or call her,” Will suggested. He thought it might be wiser if Hannibal didn’t see her when they spoke. “Why have her come here and send her away shortly after?”

Hannibal called her the next day while Will was out stalking the good doctor. His appointment was in a few days and things would move quickly afterwards. He already knew that his office was empty at weekends. He was also sure he would be open for a bribe to do the operation. Will wasn’t quite sure how he could manipulate Rapoza to stay quiet. The doctor hadn’t liked him much when they first met. He would have to play it by ear during their appointment.

Will let go of the stalking early so he could follow up on their discussion about sex toys. Google Maps led him to a shop, but the variety of goods weren’t particularly exciting. Will wondered if he should order online or look for another shop. In the end, he was too impatient and bought a glass plug, some scentless lube, condoms and a very realistic looking dildo that had a similar form to Hannibal’s cock. He left the unassuming bag in the hallway when he came back to the flat in the early evening.

Chiyoh, as it turned out, had gladly taken Hannibal’s new request and would find them a new place to recuperate. Will wasn’t surprised and a little bit amused when Hannibal frowned as he told him. They were in the living room and Will was doing his stretches before exercising. Hannibal was sitting on the couch watching him. The walking frame was close and the wheelchair wasn’t in the room. It hadn’t been when Will came in and he wondered if Hannibal would wait for him to leave again before he got up and used the frame.

“She needs her freedom,” Will repeated circling his arms in loose movements. Smirking, he added: “And we can have more sex on the tables when she isn’t with us.”

“An incentive…,” Hannibal remarked dryly.

Will turned to look at him over his shoulder and grinned.

“You liked it.”

Hannibal scoffed.

“Want to leave?” Will asked and bent down to touch his toes, stretching the tendons of his legs.

“Why should I?” Hannibal asked.

“Last time we were both in this room and the mats were out I ended up fucking you on the table. If you scoff at that maybe you should go.”

Hannibal was silent and Will tensed up as he stopped himself from checking if he was angry.

“Maybe you are overestimating your appeal. You are sweaty, your shorts are unflattering and your language is quite crass.”

“Says the man who once told me I knew better than to breed,” Will said and huffed. Inwardly, he smiled. Having Hannibal verbally fight with him was nearly as nice as their tumble on the mats had been.

“Is there a reason behind your provocation?” Hannibal suddenly asked. Will, who had been sitting on the mat and bending forward over his legs, straightened up and turned around on his butt.

“What do you think?” he asked still smirking.

Hannibal narrowed his eyes and then looked to the walking frame.

“Do you want to see me use it?”

“There is a bag with a dildo in the hallway,” Will said, with more confidence than he felt, instead of answering directly.

They stared into each other’s eyes until Will licked his lips. Hannibal’s eyes dropped to watch the movement.

“Come on,” Will said and leaned backwards to present himself better. “There was a time where all you wanted to do was fuck me over. Don’t tell me you are no longer interested.”

“I am,” Hannibal said watching him sharply.

“Good.”

Will sank onto the mat and bent backwards. His shirt got pulled upwards and he hoped the smiling scar was visible over the hem of his trousers.

“I will be here warming up,” he said, with closed eyes. “You join me when you are ready.”

Will waited motionless. It quickly became too much and he restarted his exercises. He made sure not to look at Hannibal as he moved. Half of his concentration was on Hannibal, waiting and hoping for him to get up. When it happened, Will smiled, happy for the growing acceptance it showed. It took Hannibal a long time to leave the room. As satisfied as Will was, he also visibly relaxed when he was alone. He continued with his exercises but started to worry about Hannibal not returning as time passed.

When the door finally opened, Will looked up in relief. Hannibal was in the wheelchair, he had a folded towel on his lap. He hadn't changed clothes and was still wearing comfortable exercise clothes.

They were staring at each other again. It was Will who looked away this time. Suddenly self-conscious as he looked down at the towel.

"Is it okay?" he asked.

"It?"

"The stuff I bought," Will said rolling his eyes. He got up from the mats and sat down on the sofa. He wanted to go to Hannibal but thought it would be better to let Hannibal come to him.

"It is sufficient," Hannibal said while moving closer.

"We can buy better stuff," Will said worried it wasn't up to Hannibal's standards. "Maybe together? The shop I found wasn't very big."

"It is fine, Will," Hannibal said and Will relaxed. Still, Hannibal made no move to come closer.

Awkward, Will thought when they took up their staring contest again.

"I think," Will said slowly, "you have to do the work this time. And if you can't do something, you have to tell me what I should do."

"Is this part of your plan to annoy me into old behavior?" Hannibal asked interested.

"Is it working?" Will asked back with raised eyebrows, spreading his legs slightly. Presenting himself wasn't natural for him, but he was willing to give it a try.

"I want you to undress," Hannibal said. Will didn't move.

"*Tell* me to," he suggested to Hannibal.

"*Undress* Will," Hannibal ordered. With a short shudder at the tone, Will sat up and pulled his shirt over his head, letting it fall on the floor.

"Quick or slow?" he asked Hannibal and cleared his throat.

“Quick,” Hannibal answered immediately.

Will rushed. The pace was good for him, he didn’t have time to feel awkward when he was hurrying to take off his shorts and underwear.

Naked, he asked: “Where do you want me?”

“On the couch,” Hannibal said. “Move the mats to the side before you get on it.”

Will hurried to make space between the couch and the mats by moving the latter aside. There was enough space for Hannibal to sit beside the couch in the wheelchair, which was what Will assumed Hannibal wanted to do.

“Get on your hands and knees,” Hannibal ordered as Will was moving to sit down. Will didn’t hesitate, he turned and got on the couch on his hands and knees. He didn’t like that he couldn’t see Hannibal now. But he really liked that Hannibal had continued to order him around. He heard the wheelchair moving closer and then he felt Hannibal’s hand on his flanks. His fingers where warm and the touch made him shudder. Will didn’t hear Hannibal open the lube but he must have, because next thing Will knew Hannibal pushed a lubed finger into his ass.

“No foreplay?” Will asked with a gasp.

“Have I misunderstood you?” Hannibal asked and added with emphasis: “I thought this is about *me* ordering *you* around for *my* pleasure.”

His finger was moving around inside Will in a not unalluring way.

“I’m not complaining,” Will added, breathing deeply. He was pretty sure Hannibal would make him enjoy it despite his words.

“Good,” Hannibal said. “Get on your elbows and put your face onto the cushion.”

Groaning, Will followed the order. It was easier, in a way, not to see. He could concentrate on the feeling of being penetrated, invaded, by Hannibal and the pleasure of his prostate being stimulated. His touches were more decisive than Will had expected given Hannibal’s general low energy levels. But he liked it and, in this moment, he didn’t care much about manipulating Hannibal. The pleasure was enough to blank out his thoughts. He had gotten hard and as Hannibal added a second finger Will began to shake. He was glad to have done a warm up. He was sure otherwise his shoulder would have given out. Hannibal surprised him by pulling out and patting his butt.

“Get up, Will,” Hannibal said. It took Will a moment to comply. Pleasure drunk, he got up. Kneeling on the couch, he watched Hannibal move from the wheelchair onto the couch. Hannibal’s upper muscles had developed nicely in the last couple of months.

“Come here,” Hannibal ordered pointing at his lap. Will climbed onto his lap placing his legs either side of Hannibal’s and his arms over Hannibal’s shoulder. His own cock was hard

between them and when he sat down, he felt Hannibal's half hard dick.

"Are you there?" Hannibal asked with a very satisfied smile.

"Hngh," was Will's only answer. He kind of wanted to tell Hannibal to go fuck himself for that question. Instead he pressed his face against the soft skin of Hannibal's throat.

"Lift yourself up a bit," Hannibal said and placed his hands on Will's buttcheeks, spreading them as Will lifted himself up. Two fingers invaded him again, pushing lube into him. Will wanted to rub himself against Hannibal's stomach. Hannibal stopped him when he tried to move though.

"Please," Will moaned and moved backwards onto Hannibal's fingers. Hannibal hadn't touched his prostate again, but Will liked the penetration and the accompanying feeling of being owned.

"No," Hannibal said and pulled his fingers out again. Will whimpered at that and licked over Hannibal's skin. He wanted contact, wanted release, but knew he would have to let Hannibal set the pace. After all, Will had wanted Hannibal to take charge.

Thankfully, he didn't have to wait for long. Hannibal had grabbed something and was now placing the tip of the dildo Will had bought against his opening. As it was pushed in, Will cursed himself for not buying a smaller one. It burned and Will's erection wilted, he took deep deliberate breaths to be able to lower himself onto it.

With his mouth open, Will was breathing through the burn and stretch. He liked it and didn't like it.

"Lift yourself up," Hannibal instructed, his right hand placed on Will's hips and guiding him up and then down.

"More lube, please," Will begged. The stretch was too painful to be arousing.

"As you are asking so nicely," Hannibal agreed smiling.

Will lifted himself up and Hannibal added enough lube to make it easier when Will moved downwards again.

"Better?" Hannibal asked.

"Yes," Will groaned.

"Close your eyes," Hannibal told him and Will did. It was easier to concentrate on the arousal that was building up again now. Hannibal let go of his hips and started to touch Will everywhere with his right hand. He ran his fingertips over Will's straining leg muscles as Will fucked himself on the dildo.

Hannibal's hand moved away. Will kept his eyes closed, not wanting to defy Hannibal's

order. So, the next touch surprised him. Hannibal touched the scar on Will's stomach, tracing the skin around it. A whimper escaped Will and he had to squeeze his eyes together to not open them.

"I dreamt about gutting you," Hannibal said pressing his hand flat against Will's belly. "Stop for a moment."

"Was it a nice dream?" Will asked, still half impaled on the dildo as he opened his eyes. His legs were shaking from having to hold himself up halfway. Hannibal's face gave him the answer before he spoke.

"You always died," Hannibal said, his mind far away.

"I didn't die," Will said. His arms were still around Hannibal's neck and he pulled him closer. "I lived. You cut me in a way that I would live."

Because no matter how betrayed you felt, you couldn't imagine a world without me.

"Yes," Hannibal said, remembering and focusing on Will. "Yes, I did."

And then, with a harder voice, he added: "Down Will."

Hannibal's hand moved back to his hip and he was quickly pushed downwards. He must have moved in a good way when he pulled Hannibal closer, because the dildo hit his prostate and Will moaned satisfied.

"Ah, we found the place again?" Hannibal asked condescendingly.

"Fuck you," Will said without emphasis and repeated the move.

"Another time," Hannibal answered smugly. It made Will grind his teeth and dig his nails into Hannibal's shoulders. He didn't stop fucking himself on the dildo though. Hannibal took Will's cock in his free hand and between the penetration, the repeated pressure on his prostate and the massaging of his cock, Will came embarrassingly fast, spilling over Hannibal's hand and stomach. He heard himself moan and whimper. His body was shaking and he would have collapsed if it were not for the dildo still partially in him.

"Take it out," he asked.

"No," Hannibal said, slinging one arm around Will's waist. "Sit down."

The urge to curse and reject Hannibal's order was great. But he had wanted Hannibal to fuck him and if he needed to hurt Will for that, Will would accept the pain. Slowly Will moved and sat down on the dildo, taking the half painful, half arousing sensations it caused until he was fully seated. Hannibal's hand, that had held the plastic base, pressed against the bottom of the dildo and his cheeks.

"Satisfied?" Will asked a bit pissed off. Hannibal patted his back and took a good while until

he answered.

“Mentally yes,” he finally said. “It is nice to order you around, you were right about that.”

“But not your body,” Will added unsurprised. He could feel that Hannibal wasn’t hard anymore. “Want to repeat this sometimes?”

“Absolutely.”

“Can I get up now?”

“Stay a little longer.”

Sighing, Will stayed still until Hannibal repented after long, long minutes and let him get up. His legs were weak and he had to sit down on the floor at Hannibal’s legs to recover.

“I might have to stay here for a while,” he said, pressing his head against Hannibal’s knees.

“Flattering,” Hannibal said amused.

Will felt too tired to answer in any intelligent way. He stayed on the floor, placing his head against Hannibal’s knees. Not surprisingly, Hannibal’s hands found his hair and he played with it.

“Are you smearing lube into my hair?” Will asked not bothered.

Hannibal’s hands stopped.

“Yes,” he said without apology and continued playing with Will’s hair.

Will snorted but let him.

When they got up much later, Will was stiff and sore and in an urgent need of a shower. Hannibal, seeing his state, sent him off and tidied up the living room himself. They spent the rest of the day in content togetherness. Will dozed a little and was glad that they had retired early.

He felt rested when he woke up the next morning. It was a little later than his usual time. Hannibal had already gotten up and when Will came into the kitchen, he found a prepared breakfast with a note that Hannibal had left for his physio. Will ate and went on the balcony to enjoy his coffee. He hadn’t come up with a good plan for the plastic surgeon. He was reasonably sure that he was fine with killing him. But the logistics of getting him to operate on Hannibal seemed too complicated. He wished Hannibal would help.

Will’s thoughts stopped at that. He realized, he hadn’t even asked Hannibal what he should do, which was stupid. Hannibal was a master at getting away with murder. Will laughed at himself. Of course, he knew why he hadn’t done it yet. Hannibal’s passiveness made it hard for Will to push him into things. Apart from sex, as yesterday had showed. And on the day

before, Hannibal hadn't minded. In fact he seemed very happy to have been put in charge.

When Hannibal came back about an hour later, Will walked up to him with a swagger, bent down and greeted him with a kiss. When they separated he said: "I need your help planning a kill. Will you help me, please?"

Hannibal's eyes widened slightly as Will watched him.

"I can't think of any elegant plan," he continued, "and as you are the master of elegant plans…"

"I can help," Hannibal answered.

"Good," Will said. "Want to hear what I found out about him so far?"

They talked for a long time. First Will reported all his findings, then Hannibal asked questions. They plotted together afterwards. In the beginning Hannibal made few suggestions, but as Will poked holes into his own plans, Hannibal started to fill them with ideas. He wasn't very decisive, but Will found him more involved than he had hoped. They soon settled on a simple plan.

The next day brought the appointment. Will took Hannibal with him just as they had agreed. Compared to the cat and mouse discussions they had with Jack in the past, luring the good doctor into their trap was easy. Money, as it turned out, was a motivator for Rapoza. Will enjoyed the verbal sparring but couldn't help feeling disappointed when they left. Something was missing.

Rapoza had been hesitant to plan any surgery without seeing the scar. When Hannibal had explained that he was a doctor himself, the talk had become easier. Trauma explained his hesitation to show the brand, and money made their excuses go down easier. Will felt like he had joined a soap opera, but Rapoza accepted their story seemingly without any doubts.

"That was too easy," he told Hannibal after they left the doctor's office.

"Because he wasn't questioning us?"

"He is not that dumb to believe us so easily," Will said.

"Indeed," Hannibal answered. "But he was relaxed. From our insinuations he might believe we want secrecy to get rid of the mark without someone knowing. I don't believe he thinks we are wanted criminals. Our cover story of being victims of a hate crime has come in handy. Homosexuality is distasteful in his eyes, wanting to get rid of a mark caused by it… it's something that has to be hidden in his world."

Will nodded. Rapoza's worldview was smaller than theirs and more innocent in some ways. Being killed wasn't something normal people expected.

After they left, Hannibal gave Will a list of three locations that could be used to perform the

surgery to scout out. They separated. Hannibal left for their flat and Will spent the rest of the day checking the places Hannibal had researched. Two were acceptable for their purpose and one was perfect. Will was surprised how perfect. It was so secluded from the public and so badly secured that Will even took the risk of breaking in to inspect the interior.

He came back home and shared his findings and his astonishment with Hannibal.

“The property management has recently gone bankrupt,” Hannibal explained. “Very often no security checks are done when that happens. The properties go into a limbo with neglect.”

While they did not have a fixed date for their plan, they started packing on the next day. It annoyed Will, who had just come to see the flat as a home now that he spent time with only Hannibal in it. Since the fall, they had been very transient. He missed having a place he could call home.

They had more to pack now, but first they arranged transportation and Hannibal worked on faking their medical documents. Will was sent off to buy an assortment of printers and different kinds of papers. He also acquired blank stamps and watched how Hannibal carved templates out of them. Soon they had each a set of fake doctor’s letters and Hannibal was even able to scrub the medical digital imaging of his current identity and reinsert the names and dates of his next identity. Will watched him work in amazement.

When the paperwork was done, Hannibal started him on medical equipment. Buying surgical tools and drugs was way more complicated and difficult than Will’s previous shopping trips. It would have been easier in the US where Will knew the land and the language. He had to get Hannibal to make arrangements by phone very often and was mostly just responsible for picking up stuff and moving it to the location he had found.

When everything was in place, they went to their chosen location and set the place up for the upcoming procedure, adding some additional security in case anyone else got the same idea as them and tried to break in.

Soon after they had finished, Chiyoh contacted them as she had found them a new flat in the city they planned to move to. Will took a day trip to meet her and check out the new place. He took their new documentation with him. His paranoia wanted it far away from their current life just in case they got caught and needed to escape to a safe place. Life on the run wasn’t good for Will’s nerves, but he had to accept that he liked the challenge it offered.

The new flat was smaller than their current one in regard of the number of bedrooms. Will looked questioningly at Chiyoh after she had shown him everything. They were standing on the balcony of the flat. It had a nice view of a small park.

“Has he spoken with you?” Will asked her. Her face was unreadable.

“He said the two of you will travel on your own from now on,” she answered.

Will sighed.

“I told him to let you go your own way.”

“You did?” she sounded surprised. “I wouldn’t have expected that.”

Frowning, Will wondered why. Was he so much like Hannibal in Chiyoh’s mind? He did not ask her if she thought he was, but he wondered.

“He thinks we need you,” Will said and corrected himself immediately, “thinks he needs you. I don’t.”

“You believe he only needs you?” she asked.

“I don’t want him to need anyone,” Will disagreed. “I want him to be independent.”

“He can’t be right now,” Chiyoh said, leaning with her back to the handrail so she could look at him.

“I didn’t mean with his injuries,” Will said. Chiyoh’s eyebrows rose.

“He is unusually… yielding at the moment,” she commented.

“I know.”

“Are you doing something about it?” Chiyoh asked to his surprise.

He was, Will thought. Or wasn’t he? He was at least trying to push Hannibal into more… aggressive behavior.

“I’m trying,” he said. His little manipulations seemed to help, but he wasn’t sure if it would change Hannibal on a long-term basis.

Chiyoh frowned.

“Do you really want to continue worrying about him?” Will asked, curious at her reaction. “Don’t you want to be free from his and my influence?”

She looked away, thinking about his question. It took a long time until she answered. Will waited patiently, not wanting to hurry her.

“I do,” she said, sounding amazed. “Still, it is a strange thought to say goodbye. Hannibal has been part of my life for a long time. I cannot imagine it without him.”

You will never be without him, Will thought. *He will always be in the back of your mind, whispering about dark things.*

“I will try,” Chiyoh said and smiled satisfied. “You really believe he will let me go?”

“It’s what we agreed on,” Will said.

“Did you speak about the when too?” Chiyoh asked. “Shall I help with the move to this place?”

No, Will thought. He didn’t want her involved into Rapoza’s death. He had manipulated her into killing once, he didn’t want a repeat of that.

“No, we better handle that by ourselves.”

They stayed the night. Will took the bed and Chiyoh slept on the couch. He slept poorly without Hannibal by his side and woke up still tired. For a few moments he wasn’t sure when and where he was and he briefly panicked when thought he had time jumped again. While they drove back to São Paulo together, Will nursed his coffee and wondered if the feeling of displacement would ever fade. It had been good the last few weeks, but then something like this happened and he ended up walking around for hours, unsure when he was and if his surroundings were real.

The feeling left him as the day progressed. Hannibal welcomed them back to the flat. In silent agreement Will left Chiyoh and Hannibal alone for a while. They hadn’t discussed when she would leave, but he knew she had looked up flights for the next two days. He joined them again for the lunch they had prepared together, then left with Hannibal for physiotherapy. As he hadn’t made an appointment, Will didn’t think anyone would have time for him, but he found out that Hannibal had made a standing appointment with his own for him. It felt like a waste of money as Will hadn’t consistently joined Hannibal, but he let it go. If Hannibal wanted to spend money on him, Will wouldn’t stop him. He probably couldn’t anyway.

After training and a massage, Will went looking for Hannibal. He was loose and warm and when he found Hannibal’s room and went in to watch, he felt very soft and affectionate towards him. Hannibal, it seemed, was doing better. He asked Hannibal’s physiotherapist about him as Hannibal went for a shower.

“His mobility has much improved,” she said nodding. “He is using the aide?”

“Yes,” answered Will. He thought so. Hannibal was still too shy to let Will see him use it, but the walking frame had been left in different places in the flat recently.

“You will be leaving São Paulo soon?”

“Yes,” Will answered. They had discussed their cover story. “There is a surgeon he wants to have a look.”

“Good,” she answered. “Find a good physiotherapist after the operation.”

The next day they had their second appointment with Rapoza in preparation for the surgery.

All was well and the surgeon confirmed the date. He seemed a bit annoyed that Hannibal was still not willing to show him the scar, but the lure of the money they had promised him was obviously enough for him to still let it go ahead.

In the late afternoon Will called and cancelled the operation as they had planned. He apologized profoundly, using Hannibal's hesitation about the scar as an excuse. He just wasn't ready to show someone Will explained to the office manager.

They said goodbye to Chiyoh in the evening who had booked a flight out of Brazil for the next day. To Will's surprise, Hannibal had agreed to a dinner out and they ate in a pricey but very good restaurant. Will was confused how he had gotten a reservation at such a short notice but assumed that Hannibal had paid extra for the table. He didn't mind. It was a nice change and a return to normal in Will's eyes.

As the taxi brought them back home, Will was pleasantly drunk and couldn't keep his hands off Hannibal. He tried to reign himself in, but again and again his hand held Hannibal's or he touched his legs or shoulder.

"Anything you want, Will?" Hannibal asked as they entered the bedroom. He looked amused.

"Hmm…," Will said and pulled his loosened tie from his neck. Hannibal's eyes focused on Will's throat.

"Anything you want?" Will returned the question and licked his lips.

They spent an hour in bed and Will managed to get Hannibal hard, but not off. He still felt good about having managed it and Hannibal seemed happy too. Falling asleep was easy afterwards. Dreams disturbed Will's sleep though. He woke up a few times from strange dreams of opening empty presents.

Breakfast was a somber affair. Will was glad when it was over. Although he was happy that he would soon have Hannibal to himself, he was worried how Hannibal would handle seeing Chiyoh off. Neither emotion was something he wanted to show.

They didn't take Chiyoh to the airport as it had been deemed too risky for their covers. Instead they said their goodbyes in the hallway of the flat. Will felt very awkward and left it at "Take care". Hannibal and Chiyoh exchanged some words in Japanese and then she was gone.

"Now you are stuck with just me," Will told him, trying to make light of the situation.

"I wouldn't call it stuck," Hannibal replied. He seemed relaxed but Will wasn't sure if it was true. He didn't completely get this Hannibal yet. There was too much time missing between them. He was relearning how to read him.

"So," Will said to distract himself from his thoughts. "Kidnapping this evening?"

“That’s the plan,” Hannibal answered. To Will’s relief he didn’t offer another change of plans. They moved to the living room. He had some hours before he would collect and prepare the rental van they had chosen. He was tense. Not because he knew he would kill Rapoza, but because of the logistics. He kept waiting for the guilt and moral worry to set in. It didn’t.

When the time came, he left Hannibal to get the van with another throw-away ID. Driving through the unfamiliar city made Will feel exposed. He had to use the satnav to find his way and it didn’t help with his general paranoia when committing a crime. He knew how easy it was to reconstruct routes with GPS.

He parked the van at the rear entrance of the surgery, close to the doctor’s car and waited in the back of the van behind dark windows. He felt like a stalker, even when most of his memories of the back of vans were from surveillance. It took a long time until Rapoza came out. All his staff had already left, and like the times Will had watched him before, he went straight to the back of his car to place his stuff in it. When he opened the trunk, Will stepped out of the van, raised the gun he had taken with him and said: “I’m holding a gun on you, please turn around slowly.”

Rapoza froze, Will could see it in his stance.

“Slowly turn around, Dr. Rapoza,” he said patiently. It took a few moments, but then the man turned with shaking hands. His face was pale and his eyes unnaturally widened. Confusion mixed with the panic as he recognized Will.

“I didn’t call anyone!” he said hurriedly. Will frowned until he understood.

“You recognized us?” he asked with cold dread in his stomach.

Rapoza manically shook his head.

“Him!” he said. “I remembered Lecter after you left, but I didn’t call. You cancelled and I didn’t… didn’t want any attention.”

That… changed the plan slightly. It was unlikely Rapoza would be smooth-talked into doing an operation on Hannibal-the-Cannibal.

“Get in the van,” Will ordered. He wanted him out of the public eye to think this through. Luckily, Rapoza followed the order, nervously looking around. He was afraid, but his survival instincts hadn’t kicked in yet. He got into the van and he didn’t try anything when Will put zip ties on him. He tried to call out when Will gagged him though.

Will had planned to speak to him on their way to Hannibal, but now he didn’t. He had prepared a different story. That they had been found out hadn’t occurred to him. He wasn’t sure how to get Rapoza to help them. From everything the public knew about Hannibal, he wasn’t someone who would leave Rapoza alive.

Hmm…, Will thought. Maybe he could play it like that.

“Listen to me,” Will said when he had entered the van and started it. “We want you to fix the scar we spoke about. We have a place where you can do the surgery. Nod if you understand me.”

Through the rear-view mirror Will saw Rapoza nod with wide open eyes.

“Good,” Will said. “Now, we didn’t think you had recognized us. We planned to bribe you to keep your mouth shut and to quickly leave the country afterwards.”

Rapoza nodded again. Which was not necessary. Still, it was good to know Will had the man’s attention.

“We won’t be able to hide your knowledge from him,” Will said conspiratorially. “He will want to kill you. Maybe he will even forgo the surgery to be safe.”

When Will looked in the rear-view mirror, he saw that the man was shaking like a leaf.

“We will need to work together if we want to avoid your death,” he said. He was splitting his attention between the road and his abductee.

“You will swear to him you won’t betray us,” Will insisted and was relieved as a quick look showed him that Rapoza was nodding again.

“He won’t believe you,” Will said without looking back as he was getting into heavier traffic. He imagined Rapoza paling.

“But he will pretend to believe you and you will pretend to believe him.”

He took a side turn into a calmer street and made eye contact with Rapoza, who was possibly in shock. His eyes though, his eyes told Will he was willing to do anything to live. Will liked seeing it and he liked the feeling of power it caused. Will looked away, feeling a little bit guilty.

“After the surgery, he won’t be able to hurt you and I will let you go and move him away from here,” Will continued. He tried to believe in the words and imagined acting on them. From the look of it Rapoza believed him. For the rest of their journey, they traveled in silence. Will let the idea he had planted grow.

When they arrived, Will left him in the van in defiance of their original plan. Hannibal frowned as Will entered the old surgery they had found on his own.

“What happened?”

“He recognized you after our last visit,” Will said and briefed Hannibal on what had happened and the new plan he had set in motion.

“What do you think?” he asked after he had presented his solution.

“You’ve already put it in motion,” Hannibal said, sounding a bit miffed. A second later he added: “It could work. We will have to watch him carefully during the surgery.”

“Okay, I’ll bring him in and leave you two alone for a while so you can speak.”

Let’s do this, Will thought when Hannibal nodded and moved outside. He had parked the van close to the backdoor and quickly moved Rapoza into the building. He placed him in front of Hannibal, who was sitting regally in his wheelchair. For a moment Will considered pushing Rapoza onto his knees.

For judgement, Will thought excitedly. He let the man go without doing it and gave Hannibal the gun. He had to be the good cop. While he left the room to give Hannibal a chance to be the bad cop, Will mused absently about how far gone he was and what it meant that he just didn’t care.

He locked the van and left it outside. It couldn’t be seen from the street and the neighboring buildings weren’t in use. No matter how passive Hannibal was otherwise, he still knew how to find a good place for killing people.

Rapoza was subtly shaking when Will came back. Still, he was looking at Will and there was hope in his eyes. He was convinced he would live. Will gave him a friendly nod and then looked at Hannibal. He seemed a bit uncomfortable under a layer of indifference.

“Let’s get this started,” Will said and they got busy.

He cut Rapoza loose and followed him into the operating room they had prepared in the last days. Will helped with the preparations and continued to fool Rapoza with calming looks when the man was making eye-contact. When it came to preparing Hannibal, Will had to chain Rapoza up. When Hannibal was lying half-naked on the table on his stomach, he set the doctor lose again. He set an IV and took off the bandage. It was the first time he saw the scar and he reacted surprisingly calmly.

“You only want me to take away the name?” he asked after surveying it.

“Yes,” Hannibal confirmed.

“I could make the… pig?... the pig less recognizable too,” he added. “Smudge the edges.”

Will looked at Hannibal as he had the medical knowledge. He nodded.

“Alright,” Will agreed and took up his watch.

Rapoza sanitized the area and administered local anesthetic and they waited in silence for it to affect Hannibal. Will placed his free hand on Hannibal’s head to calm himself. In the other hand he was holding the gun.

When they were sure Hannibal's back was numb, Rapoza started to work. He started with the pig and took off thin layers of the scar tissue. He was very good with his blade, Will thought. Only a little bit of blood was to be seen. Hannibal was breathing slowly and controlled through it. Will could see the strain of keeping his muscles calm in the movements of his back.

"The next part will hurt," Rapoza warned when he was finished with the middle of the crest. The edges were indeed smudged now. You could see it was an animal, but it wasn't clearly recognizable as a pig anymore.

Will leaned forward and whispered "It looks good." into Hannibal's ear.

The surgeon took a new blade and as they had discussed before, Will went to other side of the table to help with the bleeding. When Rapoza started his incision, Will was so mesmerized the doctor had to give him a sharp look to remind him of his job. Quickly, Will swabbed at the blood that was welling up. Hannibal was lying rigid but unmoving on the table. Will wanted to touch and ground him.

"It will look like a smile, Hannibal," he said instead. Rapoza didn't look up, but he was frowning. He didn't understand the word's meaning. Hannibal though, Hannibal turned his head and looked at Will.

"Do you like that?" Hannibal asked. Will wished he could look back, but he had to concentrate on helping Rapoza. Hannibal sounded way too calm for someone who was getting cut into at the moment.

"Very much," Will said with a smile and exchanged a soaked swab for a fresh one. Rapoza had finished the first half and was now cutting away the second. Even with Will swabbing around the new wound, blood was running down Hannibal's side.

Skin landed in a kidney dish and Rapoza exchanged the scalpel for suture needles. He was working very quickly for not having help and his sutures were very fine. The skin looked tight, the thread was pulling it together. It wouldn't be comfortable for a long time.

Minutes later they were done, gauze was placed over the wound and Rapoza was nervously putting away the surgical equipment.

"That's okay, doc," Will said gently and made eye-contact. He tried to look conspiratorial when Rapoza stared at him with a fearful expression. It seemed to help as hope mixed with the fear. "No need to tidy up. You did your job."

The doctor nodded and suddenly, Will felt what he felt. The fear was overwhelming. He hadn't believed Will.

Rapoza bolted. Will let the gun drop and followed him running. He reached him before he got to the back exit of the building and crashed against his back, making him fall to the ground with Will on top of him.

“You said you would let me go!” Rapoza howled, his hand reaching for the door.

“You should have run as he was bleeding on the table,” Will said brutally as he slung his good arm around Rapoza’s throat. The fear he was soaking up from Rapoza and his own of being discovered was making him cruel. Rapoza couldn’t reply with Will cutting off his air supply. He struggled under Will, trying to get away. His arms were flailing as he tried to find some leverage. Slowly his movements became more uncoordinated and sluggish before they died down completely. Will released him when he was sure he was dead. The head dropped with a loud thud against the floor.

Will got up and stared at the body. Unlike Chilton, Rapoza hadn’t soiled himself. He let him lie where he was and went back to the operating room. Hannibal had, unsurprisingly, lifted himself up a bit and watched the door. He was still pretty drugged Will realized.

“He’s dead,” Will said content. Now that Rapoza wasn’t influencing him anymore, his fear was gone. “Lie down, please. You shouldn’t move your back.”

“I was worried,” Hannibal said, but slowly lowered himself back onto his stomach.

Will didn’t comment on that and checked the wound.

“You didn’t rip any sutures,” he said and fixed the dressing.

“Are you okay?” Hannibal asked.

Will frowned and crouched down in front of Hannibal so they were eye to eye.

“Are you asking because I killed someone?”

“Yes.”

“I’ve killed quite a few people since the fall from the cliff.”

“This is the first I’ve personally observed.”

Will tilted his head.

“You didn’t observe,” he said, trying to figure out what Hannibal’s issue was. “There was a door between us. Want me to drag him in so you can get a look?”

Hannibal’s face very openly showed his distaste for the idea. Obviously Rapoza didn’t rate on the same level as Will killing Randall Tier had.

“You still expect me to act like the Will from before the fall,” Will guessed. Hannibal closed his eyes nodding.

“Sometimes,” he said. Will huffed.

“Well, I sometimes expect you to act differently too,” he noted.

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Dr. Rapoza just died by Will's hand.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Please check out the art for this chapter by the wonderful gay4willgraham. <3

On his own, it took Will a long time to clean and collect all their stuff. They had planned to have quite a lot of time for this step and he was glad for it. When everything apart from Hannibal and Rapoza's body were looked after, Will's shoulder was hurting like hell and he was generally exhausted.

"How are you doing?" Will asked when he returned to Hannibal.

"The anesthetic is wearing off," Hannibal said. "But I'm otherwise alright."

"Do you want the painkillers?"

"I would prefer to wait a little longer."

"Okay," Will said. "I have to take care of the body anyway. Afterwards we'll move you."

He had hoped for a clean kill in the operating room, but had prepared plastic sheets for all possibilities. With his shoulder hurting, it took him a long time to get the body wrapped and to clear out the seats from the back of the van. Will was sweating through his shirt as he moved the body into the van. He went back inside, not really ready to move Hannibal, but knowing it had to be done.

"You don't look good," Hannibal said when he saw him.

"Thanks," Will said sharply. "You look really pale and ill as well."

Hannibal frowned.

"Maybe it would be best if you looked after the disposal without me," he suggested to Will. "And take a painkiller, you are holding your shoulder like it's hurting you."

“It is,” Will said and sighed. He wanted to be done with this. “I don’t want to leave you alone.”

“A bit more recovery time in a stable position can only benefit me,” Hannibal answered. “And you can leave the gun with me if it helps you to feel better about it.”

Will didn’t like it, but his own exhaustion and Hannibal’s arguments made him nod.

“Okay, fine,” he said shortly. He got Hannibal’s painkillers and took one before Hannibal took two. He put the phone, some water and the gun within easy reach and left with an uneasy feeling.

Will’s paranoia made the drive seem endless. He was still waiting for the guilt to set in, although, he wasn’t surprised when it didn’t come. Maybe he was too distracted by the practicalities.

They had decided to not dismember Rapoza in any way. When he was found, which hopefully wouldn’t be for a while, it had to look like a random crime. São Paulo had some dark spots like every city and after a long hour of navigating the van through a very desolate area, Will moved the body into an abandoned warehouse. He didn’t mess around with it, just dropped the body so it looked like someone inexperienced had dumped it.

His shoulder was throbbing on the way back and he took another painkiller, knowing it was probably too soon to do so. He still had to get Hannibal out of the surgery and into the van. They would have to switch vehicles before they left the city too. It had been part of Hannibal’s plan and he had assured Will it would be fine. As bad as Will felt right now, he couldn’t imagine Hannibal was feeling much better. There was nothing to be done about it, they had to continue.

Hannibal was waiting for him with the gun in his hand. He lowered it when he recognized Will.

“Remind me to never throw us off another cliff,” Will said as he came into the room and crouched down beside Hannibal’s face.

“Your shoulder?”

“Among other things,” Will replied and looked Hannibal over. He still didn’t look great. “How are you?”

“I will be fine.”

That wasn’t an answer. Still, Will nodded and they got to work. A long time later, Hannibal was lying in the back of the van on one of their mats. He was shaking but he didn’t complain at all. Will went back into the surgery and cleaned the table. The rooms looked pristine, like nothing had happened. Only he and Hannibal knew what had occurred. Another secret.

The switch of vehicles and the subsequent drive to the new apartment would forever stay as

one of the most stressful tasks Will had ever undertaken. He remembered only parts of it later. Hannibal slept through most of it, or maybe he was unconscious, Will wasn't sure and he didn't have the energy to check. He was just happy to see him breathe.

When they arrived at their new place, Will took no safety precautions. He just didn't have the energy for it. He parked the car and moved Hannibal through the elevator to their apartment. Once he had brought some of their belongings in from the car, he had just enough foresight to place some water bottles on the bedside tables before he crawled into bed beside Hannibal. They slept and Will dreamed of looking for Hannibal in his mind palace. No matter which room he checked, Hannibal was nowhere to be seen.

Will didn't wake up before noon on the next day. His bladder and his aching shoulder woke him. Hannibal wasn't in bed, which made Will frown. He wasn't supposed to move around. The journey the day before had been bad enough. He got up and checked for Hannibal. He found him motionless on the bathroom floor. His shirt had a bloody spot on the back and the wheelchair was a meter away from him.

Great, Will thought rushing to him. He had to cut the shirt off him to check the wound. The sutures were okay, but on the lower curve of the brand the threads were pulling on the flesh.

"Idiot," Will said half relieved and half angry. Hannibal didn't wake.

Luckily, he had collapsed on the bathroom carpet and not on the hard tiles. As Will wasn't able to move him on his own, he got him a cushion and put a blanket under his legs and over him.

Having done what he could for Hannibal, Will looked after himself. He peed, feeling weird about doing it while Hannibal was unconscious beside him on the floor, and washed himself quickly in the sink.

Dressed in fresh clothes he went to the kitchen and made himself something light to eat before he took another painkiller for his shoulder. Yesterday's activities hadn't helped with his own recovery. He sat down on the kitchen table, got one of the so far unused phones and checked the news from São Paulo. There was nothing about Rapoza, but it was unlikely that there would be until Monday at the earliest. They had planned this to take place at a weekend on purpose.

Having nothing else to do, Will went downstairs and got the rest of their stuff from the car. He took it slowly as he didn't want to use his bad side to carry anything. He saw at least two neighbors, but as the furnished flats in the building frequently changed tenants, nobody paid him much attention.

Hannibal woke up before Will had finished bringing their bags upstairs. Will heard him moving around in the bathroom and went to help.

"Hey," he said from the door. Hannibal was in his wheelchair. From the way he was holding himself he was in pain. He wanted to tell Hannibal that he should have woken him up for help, but the paleness of Hannibal's skin stopped him.

“Are you bleeding?”

“I don’t believe so,” Hannibal answered.

“Let’s get you back to bed and I’ll check it,” Will said and a few minutes and some heavy lifting later he was looking at the thankfully white bandage. He exchanged it to be on the safe side and while the sutures looked strained they were holding.

“I like that you’ll have a smile now too,” Will said satisfied as he put a fresh bandage on it. He wanted to press against it. He didn’t though. Hannibal was in enough pain right now.

The day and the days after passed in a blur. They looked after the wound, they slept, and they ate. Hannibal was sleeping a lot. For a while Will worried the wound might get infected, but Hannibal was taking antibiotics as a preventive measure and got through it with just exhaustion.

Will felt better quickly, but he was constantly tired too. Partially because he was looking after Hannibal and partially because he wasn’t sleeping well. He kept dreaming about empty houses and about killing Rapoza on his own. He didn’t feel guilty per se; it was more like he was waiting for the guilt and it just didn’t come. He kept an eye on the news in São Paulo. There was a short mention that the doctor was missing after a few days. No big investigation was happening though. He hoped the body wouldn’t be found too soon. They needed time.

When Hannibal started to feel better, they made an appointment with the surgeon he had chosen. Will went with him as his carer this time and not as his lover. With such a role, he could not stick around during the preliminary talk. Hannibal reported to him afterwards and it sounded like everything was going smoothly.

“What will we do when we’re done here?” Will asked after they returned to the flat.

“You said you would like to be somewhere quiet, didn’t you?”

Will remembered his and Molly’s cabin and thought of the dogs roaming around it. He felt his face relax at the memory.

“I would like that,” he said. “But won’t you need close contact with doctors and physiotherapists for a while?”

“For a while, yes.”

“Then we better stay urban until you’re ready.”

The talk left Will wondering. Hannibal was quieter again, and Will couldn’t push him with his current injury like he had in São Paulo. He felt like he was in Limbo. Their fall from the cliff had left him here and now he was waiting for the doors of the afterlife to open.

He started to go on walks when the flat became too small for him. When dreams of empty

rooms woke him up, Will began to leave the flat and a sleeping Hannibal in the night too.

“You are restless,” Hannibal said the third time Will had walked through the night. He was sitting at the kitchen table. Reading on his tablet. Will had just done his exercises and leaned against the counter with a cold glass of water in his hand.

“I keep having weird dreams,” Will answered. “When I wake up, I can’t go back to sleep.”

“Nightmares?”

“Not really,” Will said and took a sip of water. They left him worried, but he wasn’t waking up drenched in sweat and afraid for his life and soul like in the past. And he knew that dreaming about Hannibal’s empty mind palace probably meant he was worried about Hannibal’s missing drive.

“How are you feeling?” he asked back.

Hannibal shrugged and Will felt his eyes widened at the gesture. Had he ever seen Hannibal shrug? If he had, he couldn’t remember.

“How are you feeling about the operation?” he asked, hoping for a more detailed reply.

“I’m looking forward to being more mobile,” Hannibal answered without looking at Will. His eyes were on the screen.

Will watched him while he drank his water. He felt like he should do something. Hannibal needed another push. Will wasn’t sure how to do it though. He left the kitchen instead and went to the balcony. It was smaller than their last one in São Paulo. Everything in this city was smaller.

“Something isn’t right,” Will whispered barely audibly. He let the words go and waited for an answer that didn’t come.

He dreamt of a cliff that night. He was standing at the bottom, looking over an endless beach and grey skies.

The closer the day of the operation came, the more restless Will became. There wasn’t a night he didn’t wake up at least once. He wasn’t sure if Hannibal knew, because he rarely woke up when Will did. Sometimes Will turned on the light and watched him sleep. He felt like he was searching for something and tried to find it in Hannibal’s face. Like it would open up for him if he just stared at it long enough.

He thought about their situation while he watched Hannibal sleep. He wondered how it felt to have a mind that was at least 100 and a body that was only 50 years old but damaged and uncooperative. He wondered if he was strong enough to get Hannibal out of his current mood. It left him tired and exhausted. Will told himself that it was a phase, after the operation it would be better. Still, he continued to dream of empty rooms.

“I’m worried about you,” Will told Hannibal the day before the operation. They were packing a bag for the hospital in the bedroom. He hadn’t planned to say anything until after. It had just come out.

“It will be fine,” Hannibal said folding an undershirt.

“Not because of the operation,” Will said and sighed. Hannibal looked questioningly up to him.

“I hope the operation and being more mobile afterwards will help,” Will added.

“You are worried because of your dreams?” Hannibal asked. Will had told him about them and he knew the dreams woke Will up, just not how often.

“I have dreams because I worry about you, Hannibal.”

“You don’t have to worry,” Hannibal promised and they stared at each other. Will forced himself to smile and nodded. He hadn’t wanted to say anything yet anyway. He could let this go and Hannibal would feel better soon.

They slept holding each other that night and Will only woke in the morning, feeling fresh and rested. He pushed aside his fears and accompanied Hannibal to the hospital. It all went well and Hannibal was calm throughout the whole ordeal. Will on the other hand was constantly on watch during Hannibal’s stay in the hospital. He knew there was a risk of them being discovered. It would just take one patient, doctor, or nurse to recognize Hannibal and they would be caught. In his current state, Hannibal wouldn’t be able to run away with him.

He only relaxed when Hannibal left the hospital and he had him back in their flat. He stayed close to Hannibal during the first few days, happy to have stocked food in advance. Hannibal indulged him and Will found himself lying beside Hannibal for most of the time.

Quickly, physiotherapy was added to their daily routine again. At first, the therapist came to the flat. Will didn’t mind the man but missed the woman from São Paulo. Hannibal was so exhausted from his training, he slept more and Will was on his own for long time stretches during the day. Weeks went by and their life seemed to consist of getting better and nothing else. He still woke up from unsettling dreams.

When Hannibal was well enough for regular car travel, Will got a long-term rental and drove him to the appointments with the physiotherapist. He occasionally got a massage for himself while he waited. Generally, it felt like his shoulder was as good as it was going to get. Some locking up after two knife wounds and one gunshot wound wasn’t unexpected.

Hannibal’s recovery felt glacial this time. There were many days with little or no progress and it frustrated Will as much as Hannibal; maybe even more. Hannibal seemed to stoically go through the motions. Will hated it. After the first weeks of it, he became snappish and went on more nightly walks.

“You are frustrated,” Hannibal said instead of a greeting. Will had been out for about two hours after having woken up around 3 o’clock in the morning. Hannibal had still been sleeping when Will had left. Now he was sitting in his wheelchair in their hallway. Will closed the door and took a deep breath before he turned back to Hannibal.

“Yes,” he said. He had an urge to apologize for it. It was, after all, his fault Hannibal had needed an operation and being annoyed about him for not magically healing wasn’t fair. He leaned against the door behind him instead of saying sorry.

Hannibal frowned and Will couldn’t find the energy to figure out why.

“Would you like to take a break?” Hannibal asked.

Will blinked.

“A break?”

“Leave for a few days or weeks while I stay here.”

Will balled his hands into fists when the suggestion reached his brain.

What the fuck? he thought angrily.

“I’m not leaving you!” he said forcefully. “I’m impatient, but I’m not running away because things aren’t easy right now.”

“Aren’t you?” Hannibal asked, looking pointedly at the door behind Will.

“Don’t be an ass, Hannibal,” Will answered quickly. “I wake up and take walks and then I come back. That’s not leaving you.”

They silently stared at each other. Will held himself stiff. Anger was burning hot in his chest and stomach.

“Let’s make some tea,” Hannibal said and turned the wheelchair. He rolled it out of the hallway in direction of the kitchen. Will followed him with his eyes, but he gave himself a few minutes and deep breaths to calm down before he took off his shoes and jacket and followed Hannibal.

The kettle was already boiling and Hannibal was putting herbs into a glass teapot. Will sat down at the table and watched Hannibal work. It was calming. Hannibal’s movements had become sure and strong when he was in the kitchen.

“Let’s make breakfast too,” Will suggested. Hannibal considered it for a moment and then nodded.

“What would you like?”

“Something fancy,” Will requested and smiled challenging. “Something that will take some work.”

He wanted to see Hannibal take charge instead of just going along with it.

“You will have to do most of the work,” Hannibal said. He looked intrigued by the idea though.

“Sure,” Will agreed, “just tell me what to do.”

After checking their supplies, Hannibal decided on making a cake. Baking wasn’t something Will had a lot of experience with. He was a decent cook, but he had never had the opportunity to bake a lot. He mostly followed Hannibal’s orders. He liked it and he felt himself relax. When the batter was ready and in the oven, Hannibal prepared the cream and Will sliced strawberries.

“My sister had a sweet tooth,” Hannibal remarked. Will wasn’t sure if it was an invitation for him to ask. He hoped so.

“Did you bake a lot for her?”

“Not a lot, but regularly,” Hannibal answered. “For dietary purposes ‘a lot’ wasn’t feasible. She would always have liked more.”

Hannibal smiled a little at that and Will smiled with him.

“Taking care of her was my life,” Hannibal added. He was concentrating on his work and Will realized Hannibal had gotten into the habit of not looking at him when he was talking about stuff that was hard for him.

“As the years passed, I sometimes found myself exhausted by the responsibility.”

Ah, so they had come back to their original conversation, Will thought. He stayed silent. If Hannibal was willingly talking about his other life, he didn’t plan on interrupting. Even when the topic wasn’t to his liking.

“Chiyoh insisted I take breaks from my duties as her caregiver.”

“I don’t need a break, Hannibal,” Will said, but he sounded tired to his own ears.

“You are snappy and distracted,” Hannibal said. “You have regular nightmares that you are not talking about and are hiding them…”

“I told you what I’m dreaming about,” Will interrupted frustrated by the accusation. His shoulders had risen.

“And yet, you are hiding how often you wake up and leave our bed,” Hannibal said calmly.

That… was true. Will took a breath and let his shoulders sink, making an effort to calm himself.

“I don’t want my worries to burden you as well,” Will explained wearily.

“And as I told you before, I prefer your worries to your absence.”

Will’s face darkened.

“Something angers you?” Hannibal asked interested.

Will’s first instinct was to walk out. He didn’t want to shout at Hannibal. It felt surreal, but he didn’t want to hurt him. He didn’t want to hurt the cannibalistic serial killer he was in love with.

“You say I’m absent,” Will made himself answer. “But it’s you that’s not really here.”

Hannibal frowned.

“Explain.”

Will huffed frustrated. He realized he still had the knife in his hand. Red strawberry juice coloured the blade and his fingers. He stared at it and remembered the cliff. It made his heart beat faster. Slowly, he placed the knife on the chopping board.

“Mentally, you’re like... 100 years old and it shows, okay?”

Will rolled his shoulders, trying to relax again. He was very aware of the knife beside him, but he wasn’t sure why part of him was focusing on it.

“It feels like you’re absent,” Will added as he tried to concentrate on Hannibal and their discussion. “Not on purpose, I think. But you are slower, Hannibal.”

“Slower…”

“Older… less enthusiastic and driven.”

Hannibal’s face made it clear he hadn’t known.

“It’s not a bad thing,” Will added feeling cruel for what he had said. “But you are different and I find it hard to reach you sometimes. I dream about your mind palace and all the rooms are empty because…”

“You feel like I’m not here.”

Hesitantly, Will nodded.

“Your urge to push me into violence comes from this?”

“I wouldn’t call it violence,” Will said. He knew he was blushing as he remembered making Hannibal strangle him. “I just want you to be more active and less considerate of me.”

Hannibal was silent and Will let him think.

“I have gotten used to reigning myself in while I was looking after Mischa.”

“That’s what I thought,” Will said nodding. He felt bad for Hannibal, but also better for having spoken about his problems. “I don’t want to leave you. I don’t want a break. I accept that you have changed, I have too. But… it’s hard. It makes me doubt… us.”

“You want me to be less considerate?”

Will snorted.

“No, I want you to want to be less considerate,” he answered and went on his knees in front of Hannibal placing his hands on his legs. The fruit juice stained the pyjamas red. “I didn’t fall in love with a selfless nice guy. I fell in love with your darkness as much as I did with your light. You don’t have to hide from me or pretend. I see you. I want to see you.”

Hannibal’s features became softer as Will spoke. He reached out and cupped Will’s face. Leaning forward Hannibal kissed him. It was a sweet kiss without tongues that made Will smile into it. He leaned in, looking for a closer connection when Hannibal suddenly moved away from him in a quick backwards movement. Will fell. His hands gripped air and his chin hit Hannibal’s knee before he landed face first on the floor and which caused a sharp pain in his chin and mouth.

“Fuck,” Will groaned and turned on his side. He didn’t dare touch his face. He tasted blood and his hands and chin burned where he had hit the floor. He heard wheels move and realized what had happened. The chair had rolled away. Will started laughing. Above him, Hannibal sighed exaggeratedly.

“I assume you are alright?” Hannibal asked and then he got out of the chair to sit beside Will on the floor, who was still laughing hysterically.

“Knocked out”, he said still snickering, “by gravity and missing brakes.”

“My apologies,” Hannibal said, he moved Will’s head onto his lap and gently touched Will’s chin. Will let him, but closed his eyes at the burning pain the touch caused. “I forgot to put them on. You need ice, it will swell.”

“Yeah,” Will agreed. Still, he didn’t get up. He let the pain recede while Hannibal held his head and petted his hair.

“Get up now,” Hannibal said after a few minutes. “Get some ice and lie down in the living room. I will join you shortly.”

With a groan, Will followed the order and soon shuffled to the couch in the living room. He placed the ice bag on his chin and mouth and put his hands, palm up over his head. He had gotten some slight abrasions. The cold of the ice helped against the pain of his face, but his hands burned. It was an interesting contrast.

In the kitchen he heard Hannibal move around. After a while Hannibal joined him in the living room with their extensive first aid kit. He cleaned the wounds on his hands and the small laceration on his chin.

“You will look like you got into a fight,” Hannibal remarked as he was finished and tidied up the first aid kit.

“Pretty harmless fight by our standards.”

“You can’t always fight dragons,” Hannibal added smiling.

“I miss that fight,” Will said thinking back to it and met Hannibal’s eyes. He looked like he missed it too. “I felt so alive.”

“It’s a high point of my memories as well,” Hannibal confessed. He looked younger when he smiled. Then he leaned forward and kissed Will again. A faint taste of blood was still on Will’s tongue as he opened his mouth for Hannibal. It wasn’t a chaste kiss like the one in the kitchen. When Hannibal let go of his mouth, his lips and tongue traced a hot and wet path from the side of Will’s chin to his throat.

“I wanted to kiss you on the cliff,” Hannibal whispered against the soft flesh.

“I wanted to kiss you too,” Will replied, stretching his neck to give Hannibal more room.

A ringing noise came from the kitchen and made Will flinch. Hannibal’s lips left Will’s throat and he straightened up.

“Fuck the cake,” Will said heated.

“You wanted breakfast,” Hannibal said amused.

“I changed my mind, let’s go back to the bedroom,” Will begged. Heat was pooling in his belly and he could feel the ghost of Hannibal’s lips against his skin.

Hannibal wouldn’t give in. He turned the chair and moved back to the kitchen. Groaning in frustration, Will got up and followed him.

As they finished the cake, Will stayed silent and tried to help as much as he could. It went into the fridge to gain the right consistency and Hannibal cleared up the kitchen. Will couldn’t help much because of the abrasions.

“Can we have sex now?” Will asked when they had finished.

Hannibal's eyebrows rose. A smile followed and then a nod.

"Bedroom?" he asked Will.

"Yes, come on," Will said impatiently.

He heard Hannibal laugh as he followed him. They hadn't had sex since before the operation on Hannibal's spine and that was over two months ago now. Will felt negligent when he thought about how long it had been. Hannibal liked being touched.

They ended up on the bed and to Will's surprise Hannibal was half hard when they undressed. He knew the operation had helped, but he hadn't expected an erection. The sight made him giddy and he ignored his own arousal to get his mouth on to it.

"Turn round," Hannibal ordered as Will sucked on his cock. "So I can get to you too."

Will did and soon Hannibal's mouth began to distract him from his own task. It was a very nice position, forward and backward between them, and Will took it was a personal victory when Hannibal came first. He swallowed every drop of it and petted Hannibal's hip and flanks as he waited for him to come back to his senses after his orgasm. When he resumed sucking Will, he did it oh so slowly and Will was brought to the edge twice before he was allowed to come.

Afterwards, he lay breathless on his back on the bed until he was pulled out of the afterglow by a beeping noise from somewhere in the flat.

"What?" he asked confused.

"The cake should be ready," Hannibal explained. He sounded way less destroyed than Will.

"Oh," Will shook his head and mentally got ready to get up.

"Stay," Hannibal said to his surprise and sat up. "I will bring it here."

Will blinked.

"Cake in bed?" he asked disbelieving.

Hannibal looked at him with amusement.

"Just stay, Will."

He did and waited patiently until Hannibal came back into the room balancing a plate on his lap as he rolled himself in. The cake was good, not too sweet and fresh thanks to the strawberries and cream.

"Are you feeling better?" Will asked after emptying his plate. He was still lying naked on his

back, the plate beside him on the sheets looking up at the ceiling. Hannibal sat against the headboard.

“Better?” he asked Will.

“Are you still afraid I want to leave? Or think you have to give me the option?”

“Less… afraid,” Hannibal answered after a moment. He put his plate, which still had some cake on it, on the side table. “I would still give you the option to leave if you wanted to.”

That wasn’t really a bad thing, Will thought. It was just not very Hannibal.

“I suppose I can live with that compromise,” he said. “Just don’t try to get rid of me, even in your head.”

“I shall try.”

Life was lighter in the weeks that followed. Will felt like they allowed themselves to live more and think less. They cooked together more often than not and ate more and more complicated meals. First, he was sent out for ingredients and later Hannibal joined him on the excursions. As the seasons changed the wheelchair was replaced with another walking frame, then crutches and then two fancy walking sticks. Sex became easier, even if it was not always successful.

They started planning their next move and couldn’t decide where to go. In a way, this was good. Hannibal pushed for a quiet cabin somewhere. While Will liked the idea, he thought they still needed the distractions of livelier surroundings. He wanted to live in a city to give Hannibal what he loved and entertainment to pull him out of possible bouts of depression. He was sure they would be at each other throats soon if they only had each other as company. They couldn’t reach a consensus and discussed the pro and cons of a city life versus the middle of nowhere regularly. Will was sure he would win at some point. Hannibal just hadn’t accepted yet that Will wasn’t just humouring him.

It was during his research for a new home that Will stumbled over Bedelia online. To be honest, he had been searching Hannibal and himself to check if anything had come up. They were presumed dead, but still on the wanted lists, just very low down. Alana still had a reward out for any information on them. Generally, they just weren’t on the radar. People thought they were dead. But Bedelia had written another book. This time about the two of them and she would be doing a tour in a few months time. Will checked and the book was already out. Getting it in a bookstore was out of question, the risk of being recognized while buying a book with himself on the cover was too high. But he was able to order it online and bought 2 copies.

He didn’t tell Hannibal about her and the book. If Hannibal knew about it, he hadn’t told him either. But Will guessed Hannibal didn’t know and wasn’t monitoring their old friends as closely as Will was. He had, with Will’s approval, concentrated on getting better in the last months since Chiyoh had left and Will had taken over their planning.

When the books came, Will just dropped one in front of Hannibal, who was sitting at the kitchen table reading a newspaper. The shocked and then rather angry expression on Hannibal's face was enough for Will to know Hannibal hadn't concealed it from him.

Will unwrapped his own book as Hannibal abandoned his paper and opened his copy. It was trash. She even had a chapter entitled "Murder Husbands". Will wondered if she had Freddie as co-writer or if she had just gone stupid.

"She really thinks we're dead," was his conclusion after flicking quickly through the pages. She had included pictures. Most were from crime scenes when they had arrived together or discussed something, others were from the trial.

"It's very unlikely she would have published this if she thought I was alive," Hannibal agreed.

We should kill her, Will thought as Hannibal said: "We should leave her be. Letting her live will be the best way to make the world believe we are truly dead."

It sounded logical, yet Will hated the suggestion. He wanted to kill her and reigning in his anger was hard. He didn't disagree with Hannibal about it. The safe route was letting her live, because the old Hannibal never would have let this go. He nodded and left Hannibal in the kitchen to read his copy on the couch. He had reached the second chapter when it became clear to Will that Bedelia had used information she had gained from their therapy lessons. Angrily, he dropped the book on the table in front of the couch and stood up.

"I'm going for a walk!" he called in the direction of the kitchen and got out as quickly as he could. He hadn't gone for walks in a while. He slept better since Hannibal and he had spoken. And if he had nightmares, he woke up Hannibal. They had agreed that dealing with them together was better. This time, Will didn't wait for a reply from Hannibal. He grabbed his keys and hat and left the flat, hoping Hannibal wouldn't follow him.

Outside, it was too warm for him and the sun was high in the sky. Will went into a narrow street in which the buildings offered some shade to escape the light.

The heat didn't help with the anger. It made him slower, but didn't clear his head. It felt like a trap. Nevertheless, he wanted to take out Bedelia. Not just for the book though. He had wanted to kill her for a long time for being the one who went to Florence with Hannibal.

That night he fucked Hannibal until he was moaning and his eyes had rolled back so that Will could see the whites.

"Will you please kill her with me, Hannibal?" Will asked as he fucked into him. He grabbed Hannibal's chest hair and pulled on it to get his attention.

"If you want me to," Hannibal conceded without a fight. Hannibal seemed feverish as he looked up at him. Will felt bad for asking in that moment, but smiled, satisfied with the answer. It didn't take long for him to come afterwards.

“We do have to wait for a while,” Hannibal said the next morning, as they got ready for the day in the bathroom. The words made Will stop brushing his teeth and he spat out some foam before he glared at Hannibal who was getting into the shower. He didn’t see Will’s face. Will reminded himself that it was most likely a trap and waiting was logical. He had no argument to disagree with apart from his wish to kill Bedelia as soon as possible.

“Okay,” Will said. Even when he wanted to insist on doing it now.

He read the book, and then he read it again, and again. He wrote in the margins, angry messages for Bedelia. The book had to stand in for her. He refrained from cutting the most offending parts out of the pages because he was worried he would end up destroying it completely.

“Do you think your aggression stems from Francis’ influence or exclusively from jealousy?” Hannibal asked amused one evening, as they got ready for bed. He had gotten hold of Will’s copy and was looking through the notes Will had made. Will’s first reaction was to tell him to fuck off, but Hannibal had a point. He knew he was excessively aggressive and maybe that was because of Francis or one of the other killers he had in his head.

“Who says it’s Francis’ influence?” Will asked back. “Maybe it’s yours. You got into some rages in the past.”

“I did,” Hannibal said and blinked. Will thought it wasn’t a question, but it wasn’t quite an agreement either. “What would you prefer, me or Francis?”

“Fishing for compliments, Dr. Lecter?” Will asked amused. He narrowed his eyes thoughtfully before he added: “Maybe it’s Bedelia, she can get angry. When I told her about the plan to use you as bait for Francis, she snapped at me.”

“Fear makes her aggressive,” Hannibal said disagreeing. “You are not afraid. You just want to kill her. Why?”

Because she took you away from me, Will thought.

“Jealousy,” Will said and sighed about how basic his motivation was.

“Flattering.”

“Fuck you,” he said half amused and half tired.

“Bedelia never did,” Hannibal said, putting the book away and turning to Will. “I had sex with her, but she never fucked me.”

“If you want to get fucked, you shouldn’t bring up Bedelia,” Will said. But he leaned over to kiss Hannibal.

They didn’t discuss her again that night.

They compromised on Edmonton in Canada as their next home and shared the preparations for the change of identity and the move. Hannibal suggested a sailing boat as they would be moving through international waters and could avoid checkpoints that way. It would be pricey, but Will had gotten used to spending Hannibal's money, even though he wasn't completely comfortable with it.

Hannibal left the buying of the boat to him. Which was nice, because Will knew more about the topic and he could make sure it wasn't too extravagant. He had to travel to the coast a few times to check the boats he was considering and Hannibal stayed behind. Will didn't like it, but it was better that Hannibal looked after other details.

The boat he finally bought was smaller than he had wanted, but it had a motor and sails and he could manage it by himself should Hannibal not be able to help. Hannibal was walking on his own now, but his fine muscles weren't always reliable and he still had bad days.

"You won't like the kitchen," Will told Hannibal after he returned home. "It's too small, but otherwise the boat is perfect."

"You won't like your name," Hannibal replied lightly. He had documents on the table in front of him. Frowning, Will came closer and checked. There was a birth certificate of someone roughly his age with a truly horrific surname on it.

"If we end up using them for a long time, we'll have to get married so I can take your name," he decided after spelling it once in his head.

"Is that a proposal?" Hannibal asked.

Will snorted.

"I thought we did that after the cliff," he said. "When I couldn't speak and we promised to stick together."

"Did we?" Hannibal asked looking up. He seemed to think about it.

"It felt like it."

"It's our one year anniversary soon in that case," Hannibal said. Will could see that he liked the idea.

"We should celebrate," Will said. He mentally went through the dates, but couldn't figure out when exactly the proposal had taken place. "Is it before or after we plan to leave?"

Hannibal checked the calendar on his tablet quickly.

"Around the time we are planning to leave the country."

“How about we sail down to Rio and spend a few days there?” Will suggested. They were fit enough now to just take some time to relax instead of following their recovery program.

“We can,” Hannibal agreed. “I would like to see Rio and we can test our disguises.”

They had agreed on some changes in wardrobe and haircuts for their new identities. Testing them with people would be better than just changing clothes at sea just before going through customs when they arrived in Canada.

“Let’s do it,” Will said smiling. “I’ll plan the journey and you can decide on the itinerary for when we’re there.”

“We could journey on after Rio and go south instead of North, couldn’t we?” Hannibal suggested in the evening. They were in bed and getting ready to sleep.

“That’s a huge trip,” Will said surprised. “The boat I found couldn’t make it. I thought you weren’t fond of sailing.”

“I have rarely traveled by sea in all my lives,” Hannibal confessed and turned on his side. Will did the same so they could look at each other.

“Where did the idea come from then?”

“You are always very happy when you talk about the upcoming journey. Extending it seemed like a good idea.”

His face was suddenly so soft and Will reached out and touched his cheek.

“We’ll do the trip to Rio first and then the long one up to Canada. If you like it, we can plan something for the future.”

Hannibal turned and kissed the inside of Will’s hand in agreement. They huddled together to sleep. Later, when Hannibal had relaxed under Will, he wondered if there was another purpose to it. He pulled up his phone slowly to not wake Hannibal and checked the dates of Bedelia’s tour again. Even if they stayed a few weeks in Rio, they would be in Canada before her book tour.

Scheming bastard, Will thought happily and put his phone away before he hugged Hannibal closer.

Chapter End Notes

We are coming close to the end. O_O

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Hannibal has - hesitantly - agreed to kill Bedelia with Will.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Please check out the art for this chapter by the wonderful RAW_tanuki. <3

Will and Hannibal left the city on a sunny morning and drove to the coast. Will wasn't sad to leave the flat behind. They had had a good time there, but ultimately it hadn't felt like home. They spent a day preparing the boat and loading their supplies. Their last evening before leaving was spent lounging around on deck. Will seduced Hannibal into christening the cabin when they called it a night. It didn't take much work.

They set sail in the morning and travelled south. For the first two days all was fine. As expected, Hannibal didn't like the small size of the kitchen, but he didn't complain about it. On the third day, the weather turned and the waves got higher. Hannibal was violently sick and had to medicate himself when it got too much. Will navigated them closer to the coast to down anchor and give Hannibal a rest.

"You've been on boats before," Will remarked as they were lying in bed that evening. He had Hannibal's head in his lap and was comforting him by petting his hair.

"Not for a long time," Hannibal murmured. "Apart from after the fall, and I was heavily drugged then."

"Want to change the plan and take a plane from Rio?"

"I would like to try medication first."

"Okay," Will agreed.

He slowed their speed from that point on and surprisingly the medication mostly worked and Hannibal managed, even though he was drowsy all the time. Will found it oddly charming but refrained from telling Hannibal that. And as charming as it was, he was worried about travelling with a drugged Hannibal who couldn't react quickly if they got into trouble.

They went on with their plan and sailed around Rio so that they would reach it from a different direction to where they had come from. They dropped anchor and Will spent a few hours in the water making changes to the outside of the boat.

After disguising the boat, they changed their own appearances. Hannibal had let his hair grow out since the fall. It fell over his ears now and the plan was to let it grow even longer. They dyed it grey and white and bleached over the remaining blond and brown hair. Together with his tanned skin, he looked older and in a weird way also more relaxed. The dye made his hair even silkier than before and Will found himself touching it a lot.

Will's own hair had grown too and it was evenly cut now. They discussed wigs and if covering the scar with a beard would be an advantage or a disadvantage. His 'wanted for questioning' picture was old and there was no mention of a scar on his cheek. In the end, they went with a very youthful haircut for Will. One with some gel to make it spiky. He stayed clean-shaven and instead of hiding the scar, he used it as a distraction from the rest of his face. He was sure Hannibal would have to remind him to use the gel for a good while because hair-styling didn't come naturally to him.

When they were done, they burned their old IDs and dropped everything discriminating overboard. Weirdly, polluting the ocean made Will feel guilty. Killing Rapoza in São Paulo still hadn't managed that.

They reached Rio, easily went through the controls and docked the boat for a horrendous fee. Will decided after a few days that he didn't like the city; there were too many people for his taste. But Hannibal dragged Will into museums and concerts and Will did enjoy that. He let Hannibal dress him up and they ate in fancy restaurants. Twice, Will saw Hannibal react with a dark look when someone was rude to them. He waited for a suggestion or a collection of a business card, but Hannibal made no move to kill them. It was a confusing situation for Will, because he didn't want Hannibal to kill them. But he did want Hannibal to want to.

Baby steps, Will reminded himself during those moments. They were already doing better. The only point they were currently arguing about was if they should change their plans and abandon the boat. Hannibal insisted that he try a different drug first. He got some patches that went behind his ears. They took the boat out for a trial run. The stuff worked much better than the drugs Hannibal had used before and Will agreed they would travel up to Canada by boat.

When it was time to leave, they took the boat and sailed up north. Hannibal was in a much better condition than during their last trip and with the two of them working together, it was easier to make good time.

They reached Canada with darkened skin. Their Canadian IDs let them enter easily.

They sold the boat way too cheaply. Will wasn't happy. The boat had served them well and selling it for so little made it feel like he wasn't honouring it. But at least the new owner seemed nice.

They travelled to Edmonton by train and then spent nearly three weeks in another generic apartment while they hunted for a new home. Will found it amusing to watch Hannibal purposely ignore the historic townhouses he would love to live in. He was sitting in front of a laptop and had just changed his search parameters to houses built in the last 20 years.

“I don’t think anyone is monitoring all house sales worldwide for properties Hannibal Lecter would like,” he said teasingly, hugging Hannibal from behind as he took the mouse from him. He changed the search parameter back so that older houses were shown too.

“And I’m tired of living in buildings that look like aquariums.”

Hannibal turned his head and looked up at Will. His eyes were searching and Will smiled gently as he leaned in for a quick kiss.

“Find something you like, Hannibal.”

They celebrated their anniversary in their new home and Hannibal surprised Will with some delicate rings. It was nice to wear them. In the beginning, they reminded Will of Molly’s ring, but they looked very different and Hannibal kept kissing Will’s at random moments.

Life was good. Will was happy as long as he didn’t think too much about Bedelia.

He couldn’t help but stalk her online. Apart from information about the book tour, little was to be found online about her private life. Tattlecrime.com had of course the most information, but Freddie wasn’t reporting a lot about somebody else’s book. It was frustrating for Will to work from a different location to his quarry and without access to the FBI database.

Still, after some digging, Will could confirm that Verger money was involved in the publisher’s finances. He didn’t tell Hannibal as he didn’t want to worry him at this point. Instead, Will started looking into Alana and Margot’s current life. They were rich and there was always more information to be found about rich people. They had moved quite a lot in the last year but seemed to have resettled in Baltimore now.

“It is a trap,” he told Hannibal later. They were getting dressed for an evening out. “But Bedelia is not alone.”

Hannibal, who was putting cufflinks into his shirt sleeves, looked up and raised an eyebrow.

“Verger money financed the publisher,” Will said and put on his jacket. He had opted not to wear a tie. Hannibal liked him more casual. He liked seeing his throat and neck bare. Still, Will would have preferred not to wear a jacket at all, but the venue of today’s entertainment requested formal clothes.

“That’s interesting,” Hannibal remarked and slipped his tie around his neck. “Alana clearly hasn’t forgotten my promise.”

“What did you promise her?” Will asked.

“That I would kill her.”

Great, Will thought with an eye roll. Always the drama queen.

“Do you want to keep that promise?”

Hannibal was knotting his tie as he thought about it.

“I made it a long time ago,” he said. Will could feel the decades in his words. “I don’t think Alana is really relevant to our future. Even if she has set a trap for us.”

“You don’t mind breaking your promise?”

“No,” Hannibal answered and shrugged nonchalantly. He had finished with his tie and was checking himself in the mirror. “But I do not like her looking for us.”

He turned and grabbed his own jacket, putting it on in a familiar movement.

“And you want to kill Bedelia.”

Will felt called out and licked his lips. Hannibal had agreed to them killing her, but that had been during sex.

“Yes,” he said unsure of Hannibal’s feelings about it. “Very much.”

“Even if killing her would bring us into the limelight and put us in danger?”

Unsettling scenarios of being hunted rose in Will’s head as his wish to get rid of Bedelia and his fear of discovery fought for the upper hand. He wanted to be sensible and say no, but he couldn’t. She had taken Hannibal away and while Will was pretty sure Hannibal wouldn’t leave him again, he wanted her out of this world. He still remembered dying for killing her in the first timeline.

Hannibal took his silence as an answer.

“Do you feel like a hypocrite,” Hannibal asked interested, “wanting to kill my former lover while being… a bit relieved that I don’t want to kill Molly?”

“It’s not because she was your lover,” Will said. “Well, not just because.”

He ran with his fingers through his hair.

“Knowing…,” he started, “knowing you would rip someone’s throat out with your bare teeth if they were trying to get me is part of why I’m with you. But with her, I’m not sure you could. I’m not sure if she couldn’t still influence you.”

“So, you want me to prove my love?” Hannibal asked too serious for such a silly sounding question. “Kill her to show you she doesn’t mean anything to me and could never replace you?”

Will looked away, feeling uneasy.

“Do you want her to live?” he asked and pulled his shoulders back, getting ready to be disappointed.

“Bedelia living or dying is of no consequence to me,” Hannibal answered.

“It should be,” Will replied immediately. “She fucked you over.”

As Hannibal didn’t react, Will continued: “You know I had sessions with her when you were in jail?”

That got him a raised eyebrow.

“She wouldn’t have met me otherwise, I had to pay for it.”

“Why did you want to meet her?” Hannibal asked frowning.

“Because I didn’t get, or better I didn’t want to get, your motivation. I couldn’t ask you, so I asked her.”

“Was that satisfying?”

“It was fucking frustrating,” Will answered impulsively. In the back of his mind he realised it was time to leave for their reservation, but this was more important than a fancy evening out.

“She can be frustrating,” Hannibal agreed and tilted his head. “What did she do to enrage you?”

“She…,” Will took a deep breath and released it slowly. “Confessed to being a killer, then she told me you loved me and later she was angry that I was freeing you.”

“She told you I loved you?” Hannibal asked very slowly.

For a moment Will didn’t get it, then he felt bad and a bit triumphant.

“Yeah, sorry,” Will said, stepping closer to Hannibal and placing a hand on his shoulder, “It’s okay.” And because he had soaked up too much behavior from Hannibal, he asked: “Do you want to kill her now?”

Hannibal turned his head. He was very close and his face was unusually open.

“Are you trying to seduce me into killing, Will?”

“Is it working?” Will asked and leaned forward.

Hannibal didn’t answer. He leaned in and kissed him.

They didn’t make their reservation and Hannibal made them a plate of starters which he brought to bed. Will was glad to stay there and get food served to him after the bout of enthusiastic sex they had just had. He hadn’t forgotten that Hannibal hadn’t answered his question. And he had put a lot of effort into distracting Will and himself from the discussion. Will decided to leave it for the moment while they ate.

It came up again a few days later and Hannibal was the one who started it. They were in the living room reading when Hannibal suddenly put his tablet down and cleared his throat. Will looked over and put his book on the table when he saw Hannibal’s face.

“Okay?” he asked.

“Bedelia,” Hannibal said. Will focused on him. He had hoped Hannibal would bring her up again.

“I’m listening.”

“Taking her out in the way we want to… it would be highly irresponsible and put us in danger.”

“But you’ve thought of a way,” Will guessed, hearing his own eagerness.

“There is always a way,” Hannibal answered. “There is always a pawn.”

A pawn, Will thought and his eyes widened in amazement. *Of course.*

“You want to use someone to kill her?”

“Not to kill her per se,” Hannibal shook his head. “Just to provide us with an scapegoat for an abduction.”

“After all,” Hannibal added, licking his lips and focusing on Will, “it’s what you desire. And I wouldn’t want to deny you.”

“What’s the plan then? Find someone to take the blame?”

“And preferably do some of the work.”

“How do we do that?” Will asked.

“We start with, something you are really good at,” Hannibal said. “Finding a serial killer.”

“Okay…,” Will said with a raised eyebrow.

Will and Hannibal spent the next two months deep in true crime websites and online newspaper archives. True crime documentaries in book and DVD form stacked up in their living room. Will started a folder on his computer with profiles. He couldn’t help but want to send them to the authorities. Unfortunately, that would be as stupid as killing Bedelia in a typical Hannibal fashion. His profiles would make people suspicious. Still, he continued on with them even when he knew they weren’t good candidates for their plan and saved them for… he didn’t know what, but he didn’t want to let them go.

They had found two possible contenders who copied elements of Hannibal’s kills. One had been recently arrested, and the other was only active once a year and had just killed.

“I think I know who he is,” Hannibal said when they were looking over their search results. Something they had been doing on a regular basis since their hunt started.

“Have you met him before?”

“No, but I think he was caught in my other life. I didn’t follow up on him, but I remember part of his MO.”

“Was it the same?” Will asked curious. “There was no ‘Hannibal the Cannibal” in your other life.”

“His murders were, as far as I remember from the news, very similar to the current ones. The way he presented the bodies was different, though.”

Will nodded. It would fit. In his opinion, Hannibal’s kills had inspired the extravagant presentations of the bodies. The rest, the rest was the killer’s own design.

“Can you remember anything else?”

“I will try,” Hannibal answered. “Can you send me the profile you wrote?”

“Sure.”

It took them a few days of Hannibal studying the profile and Will doing more research. It reminded Will of the time when they had just met. The only difference was that they wouldn’t put the perpetrator in jail this time. They would use him and ultimately kill him.

“We have to go local,” Will decided after they had exhausted all remote resources.

“Back in the US?”

“Yes, back in the States. That’s where the guy is and Bedelia.”

Hannibal nodded.

“We will need new identities.”

It took them a while to get everything ready and make up a plan. The book tour came and went while they prepared. Will thought Hannibal was emotionally better as he schemed and planned. He was also cooking excessively and the dishes were becoming more and more complicated. Will refrained from asking if he had a recipe for Bedelia in mind. He wanted to ask at the right moment.

They had decided to enter the US separately. Not something Will was happy about, but logistically it made sense. Still, he didn’t like it when it was time to say goodbye. He travelled by train to the east, changed identities and then he continued by car to the border. He slept poorly because he missed Hannibal and his mind kept going through all the scenarios in which something could go wrong.

Crossing the border went without a hitch. He moved on to Washington where their killer was based, and rented a cheap place like something his alter ego could afford. He rarely went out; being back in the States made him nervous. But he did continue his research, got them new burner phones and got in contact with people who sold IDs. The current immigration situation went in his favour, as it wasn’t as unusual for people to want IDs. Going out was difficult. His current identity had a full beard to hide the scar. Unfortunately, this also made him more recognizable as he looked more like his former self.

It was shortly before Hannibal was supposed to arrive that Will found a clue to their killer’s identity. The details from Hannibal and Will’s own deductions, led Will to a small pawnshop called ‘Connelly’s’ in Washington, owned by a man of the same name. He bought a used clock in another part of the city and visited the shop. He registered a disabled camera in the showroom and closely watched the man as they haggled over the price of the clock. He left with less than he had paid for it, but knew he had found the killer.

Will filled the days between his find and Hannibal’s planned arrival with surveillance. He was happy to find out that nobody else was watching his suspect. Discovering that he had a family and children was harder. They seemed happy. It reminded Will of Molly and Walter and Hobbs and Abigail. It made him feel guilty about their plans. Will partially hoped he was wrong and that the man wasn’t the killer they were looking for. He didn’t want to take another father from his family.

“I was worried about why I didn’t feel bad about killing Rapoza,” Will told Hannibal after they had reunited. They were sitting on the bed in Will’s shitty apartment and were drinking very expensive coffee Hannibal had brought with him. “Now I wonder if his lack of social connections and family made it easier for me to take him out. I knew that not many people would miss him.”

“You didn’t empathize with him, but you do with Mr. Connelly?”

“Yes,” Will answered frowning. The thought was worrisome.

“You don’t want to kill indiscriminately,” Hannibal guessed.

Will nodded, put his coffee cup on the floor beside the bed and placed his head in Hannibal’s lap. Hannibal put his hand on his hair, but he didn’t start to play with it as he usually did.

“It’s hard to realise that I can.”

He looked up at Hannibal, who was sipping his coffee.

“How are you feeling about that?” Will asked curious.

“Hmm…,” Hannibal said and sipped again from his cup.

“I’m as conflicted about killing as you are,” he finally said. “In my… first life, killing made me feel alive. When you came along, you had a similar effect on me.”

“And in your other life?”

“Mischa was everything and I didn’t let anything else exist.”

Hannibal drank from his coffee cup again and Will waited.

“Killing was a faraway memory I didn’t touch.”

“And now?”

“Now I remember you killing Rapoza and wish he could have been a greater challenge.”

Oh, Will thought and his mouth opened in surprise. Hannibal watched him and said: “I want to see you kill another dragon.”

“We did that together, Hannibal,” Will said and quickly added: “Can you imagine joining me?”

For a moment, Hannibal was far away and then he smiled.

“Yes, I can.”

Will took Hannibal’s cup and put it on the floor beside the bed before he crawled onto Hannibal’s lap.

“I would really like to kill another dragon with you,” Will whispered before he kissed Hannibal.

They didn’t speak much afterwards and unfortunately Hannibal couldn’t stay the night. They were staying in different locations to avoid discovery. It was a nuisance, but weirdly just

knowing that Hannibal was in the same city helped Will sleep soundly.

The next day brought more surveillance. Hannibal wanted to check out Connelly's shop and Will used the school day to have a look inside the family's house. They had a flunky alarm system and Will took a risk and disabled it, hopefully making it look like just a faulty line. He waited for nearly an hour from afar before he entered just in case he had overlooked something and had triggered a silent alarm. When nobody showed up, he went inside and made a quick search.

There was nothing conspicuous in the public areas. Going by the toys and chaos in there, Will wasn't surprised. He found a big collection of real crime books in a small study though. As Will had just read a similar collection in the last months, most of the titles were familiar to him. Unsurprisingly, all the books that had been written about Hannibal were featured on the shelves .

It took Will another 30 minutes before he found a hidden compartment in the study. Under a floorboard, he found a locked box. He tinkered around with the box until he got it open. He left scratch marks with his lockpick, but that couldn't be helped. A collection of polaroid pictures and bound strands of hair greeted him.

Gotcha, Will thought and for a moment he remembered standing in the lab with Beverly and her satisfied smirk when she had found evidence.

He locked the box and put it back where he had found it. Before the floorboard was returned to its place, Will arranged a photograph of Bedelia on top of the box, it had the number of a burn phone on the reverse side. When the floorboard covered it, he felt like he was burying her.

To ensure that Connelly would check his hiding place, Will took Freddie and Chilton's books on Hannibal and placed them visibly in the trash can beside the desk. It wasn't as elegant as it should be, but he didn't think Connelly was a man of subtlety.

Will took some detours through the city and ate a take-away before returning to his temporary flat. Living with Hannibal meant living off mostly fresh and very healthy food. Having a change and eating crappy but familiar food was a treat in itself. He went back to his place before meeting Hannibal in the evening. Will suggested they meet at a cinema and found himself bemused as he sat down beside Hannibal in a nearly empty room. Hannibal was holding an untouched box of popcorn on his lap and handed it over to Will after he had sat down.

"Thanks," Will said. The adverts were running, so he didn't mind making some noise.

"How did your visit with our new friend go?"

Will took some popcorn and threw it into his mouth. Chewing, he watched Hannibal for a reaction that didn't come. Maybe there was some slight exaggeration in the form of a nearly invisible frown, but it was hard to say with the little light.

“Good. Had a look at his collection and gave him his invite.”

Hannibal nodded and Will saw him slightly relax in his chair. Connelly would get off work soon and he knew Hannibal needed to leave to take the call that would probably come.

Still, he asked: “Want to watch the movie?”

“I would rather chat with Frederick,” Hannibal answered drily and Will snorted.

“Okay,” he answered amused. “But I think I will.”

Hannibal gave him a short nod and got up. The next day they would meet again at Will’s place. He watched Hannibal go and the ads flew by. The movie wasn’t very interesting. Some action flick with too many explosions and too little plot, but it was comforting to watch something very American. He hadn’t minded being in Japan, Brazil, or Canada, but being back in the States was relaxing, even with the worry of being caught. He didn’t have to second guess what impression he made.

The next day meant waiting for Hannibal and Will spent it mostly on his bed reading a book about fishing in Canada. Hannibal had bought it for him before they left and waved away his concerns about taking something with him that might provide insight into where they were living now. If they were caught, giving them a hint of the country they had stayed before wouldn’t be the worst that could happen. And giving away Canada was better than Japan. Japan would lead to Hannibal’s family.

“How did it go?” Will asked after letting Hannibal into the flat in the late afternoon.

“He was very excited but tried not to show it,” Hannibal answered and leaned in to kiss Will, distracting him for a few minutes.

“What was that for?” Will asked.

“He was very confused about ‘me’ having thrown some books in the bin,” Hannibal answered and pressed a kiss against Will’s collarbone. “And I didn’t grasp what he was talking about.”

“Oh,” Will said as he remembered throwing the books about Hannibal in the trash. “Forgot to tell you about that.”

Hannibal lifted his head and Will saw that he was smiling warmly.

“It worked in our favour,” Hannibal said and stepped a little away from Will. “He was trying to appease me and as I didn’t react, he tried harder.”

“And does he want to kill with you?”

“Very much,” Hannibal said. “But he hasn’t verbalised it so far. It will take a while to make

him say it."

Over the next week, they met every second day to discuss Hannibal's progress with Connelly. As Hannibal had predicted, it took a few days to get him hooked. Will found it a bit insulting when Hannibal told him that Connelly thought Hannibal had killed Will because he was an inadequate partner. It was to their advantage that Connelly thought he was out of the picture, so he didn't complain about it. The man was a tool for them and Hannibal was playing him like the master he was. In the end, it took only to the end of the week before Connelly was ready to go on a killing spree to please Hannibal.

"You're back to your old form," Will teased as Hannibal reported some of Connelly's remarks.

"Old form?"

"Manipulative," Will answered smirking.

"That sounds like a compliment, but the word you use is not very complimentary."

"For you it is," Will said and then came back to their plan. "Will we be able to accelerate the rest of our plan with him being so willing?"

"It would be wise," Hannibal said. He was still searchingly looking at Will, but Will ignored it.

"I'll move on to Baltimore then."

They weren't sure where exactly Bedelia lived at the moment. Everything they had found pointed to her still living in Baltimore. Will would be responsible for finding out more.

"When will you leave?"

"Tomorrow, I think," Will said thoughtfully. "No point in procrastinating."

Hannibal nodded and then they made eye contact. Will found Hannibal's expression closed.

"Will you miss me?" he asked smiling slightly.

"Yes," Hannibal answered without hesitation. "I always do."

"Always?"

"Whenever we are not together."

The words were so simple and still, they took Will's breath away. His mind went to the other timeline and before that the hospital and Florence and the years before they had met.

“Same,” he said.

Hannibal left later that evening and Will felt too melancholic to go to sleep. Instead, he packed, cleaned the flat to remove any DNA traces and left for Baltimore.

The city had changed in as many ways as she had stayed the same. Will took a cheap motel room and avoided areas he knew. He went to check Bedelia’s house from a distance, but someone else had moved in as he had suspected.

Will carefully made some enquiries at the publisher’s office. He didn’t dare push a lot though, he didn’t want to bring any attention to himself. It didn’t lead to anything and so he had to use the information he had found about the connection between the publisher and the Vergers. He sent it to Freddie, placed a tracker on her car and went to watch her.

It took her a day to hit the publisher’s office and from the satisfied smile she had when she left the building, she had found something she liked. When she immediately left for the Verger farm, Will waited in the distance and nearly missed Freddie leaving as she took a different road on her way back to the city. She stayed home that night and Will slept close by, ready to move if the tracker alarmed him. When Freddie finally found Bedelia, three days had passed and Will looked pretty neglected as he hadn’t had much time for grooming while surveilling Freddie.

He stayed at the house Freddie had led him to after she left in a huff. He had left his car within walking distance and had to climb a tree for a good vantage point. He thought he saw Bedelia as the door was closed behind Freddie. High on adrenaline Will made himself leave a battery run camera in the tree instead of staying and took an overdue break.

He went back to Baltimore, updated Hannibal over the phone, changed hotels, washed, ate, slept, and then went back to retrieve the camera and it’s recordings the next day. Fast-forwarding through is was annoying, but after 6 hours of it, he got lucky and Bedelia strolled out of the house, her face half wrapped in a scarf and a hat on her head. Her walk was unmistakable and made up for the barely recognisable face. Fear and worry shone through her movements.

“Don’t worry,” Will told the Bedelia on the screen. “Soon you won’t have to hide anymore.”

He checked the remaining tape and saw her come back about 2 hours later. That would be enough to get to Muskrat Farm and back, he thought. Afterwards she stayed put. Will called Hannibal after he had finished watching the tape and updated him on his find. Over the coming days, Will kept an eye on Bedelia via camera and otherwise stayed out of sight.

He met Hannibal again a week later. He pulled Will into his hotel room, pressed him against the door of the bathroom and devoured his mouth. Will just gripped Hannibal’s hair and held on.

“Hey,” he groaned as Hannibal finally stopped kissing him and started taking off his clothes while nosing his neck.

“Hello Will,” Hannibal said, distracted and with a deep voice. “Please take your clothes off.”

Will gave out a strangled laugh and started on the zipper of his pants as Hannibal was already unbuttoning his shirt. As he started to pull his pants down, Hannibal suddenly dropped to the floor.

“Fuck!” Will said as Hannibal took his half-hard cock in his mouth.

This was too quick, but also really hot.

“Okay,” Will said and moaned as Hannibal swallowed around him. “I see… some time apart is… fuck… good for our sex life.”

Hating himself for it, Will gripped Hannibal’s hair and pulled him off.

“But can we maybe use the bed?” he asked. “Because this is too fast for me.”

Hannibal looked up to him, his lips red and wet.

“If you wish.”

He got up and Will took his pants, boxers and shirt off completely.

“You okay?” Will asked as they moved inside the room to the bed. Hannibal seemed okay, but his rush to initiate sex was a little unusual.

“I missed you,” Hannibal answered as he sat down, still fully dressed, and pulled Will onto his lap. It made Will smile softly as he settled down.

“And Connelly is… annoying,” Hannibal added as he slung his arms around Will’s waist. *Rude*, Will heard and put his arms around Hannibal’s neck as he enjoyed the closeness.

“You can kill him soon,” Will reminded him and hummed as his naked skin moved over the fabric of Hannibal’s clothes. It reminded him of the sex he had had with Hannibal’s counterpart in the past on the dining room table.

“Want to replace a memory from a past you don’t remember?” he asked and pushed his hips against Hannibal’s stomach while pulling Hannibal’s head against his chest.

“Always.”

“Fuck me while you stay dressed.”

Hannibal looked up and raised his eyebrows.

“I can do that,” he said and he did.

Will felt shaky afterwards and lay on his stomach on the bed as he watched Hannibal get undressed.

“Was that to your satisfaction, Will?”

“Very,” he answered sounding wrecked. He didn’t have to ask if Hannibal had liked it too, he had multiple bite marks on his throat and neck which showed he had enjoyed himself. Will dosed off for a moment. When he woke up, Hannibal was sitting in a chair beside the bed and was drawing him. Will closed his eyes and listened to the scratch of the pencil on the paper.

“I brought the recordings,” he said when it felt like Hannibal was nearly done.

Hannibal hummed a confirming noise and a few more minutes passed. Then Will heard the paper being put aside and opened his eyes again.

“Can I get up?”

“Of course.”

Will left the bed, took his clothes, gave Hannibal the USB-stick with the video material and a paper with times on it and went for a shower. When he came back Hannibal was on his laptop and was fast-forwarding to the time slots with footage from Bedelia.

“She is hiding,” Hannibal remarked when Will joined him.

“She poked the bee hive with her book,” Will said and shrugged. “I wonder what her motivation was. Was she so worried you might still be alive or did Alana make her write the book?”

“If all works as we planned, you can ask her.”

“I will.”

He wanted to know what Alana was doing, how far Bedelia thought she would go.

“You believe she went to Muskrat Farm after Freddie’s visit?” Hannibal asked.

“I do, the time frame fits.”

“But nobody’s watching the house, no bodyguards?”

“None that I could see and her home is a bit desolate, there aren’t many places you could hide people.”

“Unless the surveillance is only technological,” Hannibal said. He leaned back in the chair

and frowned. “I wonder if she has a panic room.”

“Hang her out as bait, wait until someone attacks, she hides in her panic room while her attackers are caught on tape,” Will said following Hannibal’s thoughts.

“And if it’s us, even if we escape, a manhunt would start.”

“Connelly knows you are alive, Hannibal.”

“It would be unfortunate if he got caught alive.”

“We need to smoke her out,” Will said. He turned and leaned against the table the laptop was on. “But she won’t leave her safe place until we are either caught or she doesn’t feel safe anymore.”

“Then we change direction. We don’t work Bedelia, we work Alana,” Hannibal said. “I could speak with Connelly and change his target.”

“No,” Will said resolutely. Connelly was a wild card and he didn’t want him close to the Verger family. “Don’t mistake me, I like the idea, but I don’t want to use Connelly. I’ll handle it myself.”

Hannibal didn’t look happy.

“I won’t get caught,” Will promised.

“You don’t know that.”

Will reached out and cupped Hannibal’s face.

“No, but I know you’ll free me if I am,” he said while stroking over Hannibal’s cheek with his thumb.

“If I’m not caught as well.”

“The only time someone caught you was because you let them,” Will reminded him.

Hannibal didn’t disagree.

Will spent the next days checking on the Vergers. It wasn’t easy as the farm had too many entry and exit points and Will was only one person. Had he had endless time, it would have been easier and safer to find a weak point. As it was, Will didn’t want to let too much time pass. Connelly was on the hook now, but he could easily get spooked if the wait was too long.

He got lucky on day six as he figured out where Morgan’s school was thanks to some paparazzi pictures. Lying in wait there, it became clear that Margot took Morgan to school in the morning and collected him in the afternoon. They had a bodyguard and a driver with

them, but two men were manageable.

During his preparations, Will considered not telling Hannibal. He got over it and updated Hannibal on his plan. He didn't like it, but also couldn't find any errors in Will's scheme.

As hoped, Will's plan worked very well. He got the driver out of the way in the school parking lot without being seen, while Margot and her bodyguard took Morgan inside. He tasered the bodyguard when he got back into the car and sat down in the passenger seat. He hoped that the hat, scarf and shoulder pads he was wearing would disguise him sufficiently. He drove off with two unconscious men and a clueless Margot in the backseat. He took the back way to the farm and turned on the cellular jammer he had gotten in advance after they left more populated areas. He stopped in a quiet road outside of town, got out with his gun in his hand, opened the backdoor and found a wide-eyed Margot staring at his gun while pointing her own at him. He was glad for the bullet proof vest he had put on.

"Let's not escalate this," Will said. "I'm here to make a deal."

"Will," she said and the gun shook a bit in her hand. Her face was a mixture of shock, hope and fear.

"Margot."

They stared at each other as Will waited for her to calm down. Her eyes flickered from his eyes to the gun, then to his facial scar. She also kept looking behind him.

"Hannibal isn't here," Will told her. He thought that would calm her. Oddly, it made her more nervous.

"He isn't with Morgan or Alana either." Will tried to make eye contact. He had guessed right, because Margot slowly calmed down and relaxed the hold on her gun.

"What kind of deal?"

"Can I sit down?" he asked and as predicted she shook her head and got out of the car. It took him 5 seconds to take away her gun. He tried to touch her as little as possible as he did it.

"Sorry," he said to her, ignoring her wide eyes and quick breath. "He would be angry if I got myself shot and I have had enough medical recuperation in my life at this point."

He could see by her stance that she was thinking about running, but his calm demeanour and the gun in his hand made her stay still. He had gambled on that. Margot had been taught to take the punishment and stay put.

"A deal, Margot," he reminded her and nodded to the car. "Let's sit down and talk about it."

It took her a moment to decide, but she got back into the car and didn't try to take his gun

when he followed her.

“What deal?”

“A very simple one. I want Bedelia.”

Margot’s eyes shifted down and up again to Will’s face. She wasn’t comfortable.

“She would sell you out in a minute if she thought it would save her life, Margot.”

It took her a moment to answer, but when she did, she sounded strong and curious.

“And is my life in danger, Will?”

Will made himself focus on her. He couldn’t show any hesitation. He concentrated on Hannibal and how he would have handled Margot.

“I don’t mind leaving you in the world,” he answered. “But you stole something from me once, and I believe it’s time to give me something back. We will leave you and your family alone afterwards.”

She was thinking.

“You can’t promise for Dr. Lecter,” she said.

“I can,” Will disagreed.

It surprised her, he could see her eyes widen and her mouth open a bit before she caught herself.

“Give me Bedelia and you and your family will be safe from us.”

She pressed her lips together, but didn’t look away.

“Alana won’t…”

“Do we need her Margot?” Will interrupted her. “Does she call all the shots?”

“Don’t try to manipulate me, Will. I know when someone tries that.”

A smile appeared on Will’s mouth and he leaned back against the seat, waiting on Margot.

“I know Dr. Lecter is a man of his word,” she said. “He promised Alana he would kill her. You believe he will break that promise for you.”

Will nodded. “But you can’t be sure I’m right?” he guessed.

“No, I can’t.”

It was a valid concern, Will thought. He lifted his left hand, the hand that wasn't holding his gun.

"I'm going to reach for my cell phone, don't overreact, please."

He called Hannibal, who was currently keeping Connelly busy and without an alibi, and turned on the speaker.

"Yes," Hannibal said when he took the call.

"Margot has a question," Will told him. For a moment, there was silence.

"Hello Margot, I hope married life is treating you well."

"Dr. Lecter," she said, sounding out of breath. Maybe she hadn't believed he was alive. She suddenly straightened her shoulders. "I'm well, thank you for asking."

"I'm glad you have found a family."

Will thought he heard a "like I have." silently at the end of that sentence.

"And you won't hurt them, if we get Bedelia," Will said.

"And if Alana stops trying to catch us," Hannibal added and Margot watched the phone attentively. "I don't mind breaking my promise to her as long as I have my family beside me."

Margot looked up at Will and he couldn't stop himself from smiling softly.

"Quid pro quo," Will said while Margot watched him sharply.

"I'm not sure Alana will stop hunting you if you kill Bedelia."

"Why?" Will asked.

"The whole…," Margot made a waving motion with her hand, "…book thing is a way of checking if you are alive, to find out if we are safe."

Will nodded, they had thought as much.

"If I come back and tell her I got apprehended by you and then Bedelia dies, it will just encourage her to keep looking."

"We can avoid it," Hannibal said.

"If you are willing to lie to Alana," Will added.

She looked at him questioningly as he placed the phone on the seat beside him and pulled out an envelope from the inside pocket of his coat. Margot took it and found pictures of Connelly in it.

“It’s the man who attacked you today. I made sure your men didn’t see me clearly. You will be the only eye witness.”

She stared at the pictures.

“And *who* is he?”

“A man who has a collection of hair. The women the hair belongs to… their families haven’t seen them for a while and never will again.”

Will let her think through it.

“I will have to lie to Alana,” Margot finally said.

“Your lie is the price you pay for your safety,” Hannibal said from the phone.

“And if I say no?” she asked, focussing on Will’s eyes.

Will took Hannibal’s silence as a cue and answered without looking away from her.

“I will kill you,” he answered with a sad voice. “I don’t want to, but if it’s necessary to protect us, I will.”

He had known it could come to killing her or Alana when he made the plan, but saying it was still hard. Alana had been his friend, not always a good friend, but she had tried.

Margot’s fingers were shaking, but her voice was strong when she answered: “Alright, Bedelia for my family’s safety. What do you need from me?”

Thankfully, while Margot hadn’t been actively involved in Alana and Bedelia’s scheme, she knew the plan. There was indeed a panic room in Bedelia’s current home just as Will and Hannibal had suspected. The house had internal monitoring and some rooms could be locked remotely. There were professionals stationed in a house close by to apprehend attackers and accompany Bedelia if she really had to leave the house.

“They thought you would try to get her during the book tour,” Margot noted after Hannibal had disconnected the call. Will was glad of the timing because Hannibal might have called him out on his eagerness to get Bedelia.

“Hm…,” he hummed and handed her some photographs of Connelly. “Now, remember his face. He is the man who attacked you.”

Later, after he had gotten all the information he wanted, Will left Margot tasered in the backseat of the limousine, some of Connelly's hair in her hand. The driver and bodyguard he left zip tied in the front seats. He rolled his shoulders as he walked away from the car, dragging around unconscious people wasn't good for them. He went through the woods to the car he had left close by.

Hannibal was already moving and he knew he couldn't join him. It was a pity that he had to work with Connelly alone for the next part. But their sacrificial lamb couldn't know Will was alive, yet. He drove back to the city, got rid of the car, took public transport to his other car and left Baltimore. Nostalgia made him take the southbound way out of the city and for a moment he longed to drive over to Wolf Trap.

"It's gone," Will reminded himself and thought about his dogs as he circled around Baltimore. They weren't there either. Hopefully, Molly was looking after them. Life had changed, he had changed. Silently, he said goodbye to Baltimore and Wolf Trap and Molly and Walter and the dogs as he drove North.

He thought of Hannibal to distract himself. Soon he would be slaughtering his way through Bedelia's watchdogs with Connelly. It made Will a bit jealous when he thought about it. Unfortunately, Connelly couldn't know that Will was alive yet. Maybe he would make Hannibal tell him everything in detail later.

When he reached their safehouse about three hours later, he was nervous as hell. He trusted in their plan, but a lot of things could go wrong. The house was as pretentious as Hannibal's former townhouse, Will could tell from the outside alone. He found the keys where Hannibal had said they would be, hid the car behind the house and started to get it ready for their visitors. He let the fear burn through him as he worked. Until Hannibal arrived safe and sound, there was nothing he could do to calm down.

An eternity later, he watched from an upstairs window when a car arrived. His fear died down when Hannibal stepped out of the car. Even Connelly following him closely didn't sour Will's mood. He left the window and hurried down the stairs. When Hannibal stepped into the entrance hall, Will waited behind the door. Hannibal turned and smiled as he saw Will. Connelly stepped into the house and Will ambushed him quickly by slinging his arm around his throat and strangling him.

"I believe you have met my husband, Mr. Connelly?" Hannibal asked as if he was offering a casual introduction. Connelly strained under Will and tried to free himself. His hands were helplessly trying to pull away Will's arm.

"He was not impressed by your opinion of him."

Will snorted and kept squeezing Connelly's throat. His movements became slower.

"Enjoying yourself, Hannibal?" Will asked, sounding a bit out of breath.

"Very much," Hannibal answered smiling. "I know I was hesitant about your wish to go back

to killing and eating Bedelia, but I must say this day has been very pleasant so far."

Will rolled his eyes at the cocky tone, but he also smiled because Hannibal sounded very much like himself again. Connelly's arms flopped and his body began to relax.

"I believe you can let him go," Hannibal said and stepped closer. He touched Connelly's neck with his fingers, taking his pulse, and nodded sharply. Will let go and the man collapsed on the floor.

"Is he still alive?" Will asked. If they wanted to pin Bedelia's death on him, he had to stay alive a little longer. Hannibal nodded with a satisfied smirk. Will remembered their first breakfast and Hannibal comparing him to a mongoose ambushing snakes. This must have been what Hannibal had seen.

"Do you remember how I called you a mongoose I want under the house when the snakes slither by?" Hannibal asked.

Will blinked.

"I… I just thought of that myself."

Hannibal looked delighted and in the next moment he had stepped up to Will, grabbed his head and kissed him wet and deeply. Surprised, Will held onto his arms and when Hannibal pushed him, he moved backwards until his back hit a wall. Will whimpered when Hannibal stopped kissing him and tried to follow his mouth with his own.

"We need to settle our guests in their rooms," Hannibal reminded him smirking. "Afterwards I very much want you to fuck me."

Will growled and gripped Hannibal's arms even harder then he had before. He needed to take some deep breaths before he could let him go. He wasn't sure what turned him on more, Hannibal's crass request or his obvious delight at seeing Will strangle someone.

"Fine," he said and let go. "I'll take him up; you look after Bedelia?"

"Of course," Hannibal answered and swaggered out of the house. Will felt another growl form on his lips. Some part of him wanted to run after him and tackle him down on the front yard. He resisted and pulled up Connelly. He had to carry him upstairs, which caused his shoulder to complain. He threw the man on the bed, tied him up securely and put him in the adult diaper Hannibal had insisted on. It was a weird thing to do, but probably better than having to clean the bed up later. Hannibal joined him and brought an IV which he put in place.

"Bedelia?" Will asked.

"Is set up as well and sleeping soundly," Hannibal answered.

"I prepared the master bedroom for us," Will said and Hannibal still looked very cocky. It

made Will frown.

“Run,” Will said.

It took Hannibal a second before he smiled wide and turned with an elegant grace Will hadn’t seen on him in a long time. He was already running for the door of the room when Will turned as well and hurried after him. He was impossible to catch in the corridor, but when Will reached the bedroom, the space was limited. Will was able to get a hand on Hannibal’s shirt. It slowed Hannibal and Will embraced him with his free arm, turning them sideways as he did and making Hannibal fall onto him on the ground. It was more painful than Will had expected because Hannibal’s left elbow hit him in the stomach as they landed on the carpet. He kept hold of Hannibal as he breathed through the pain. Hannibal struggled beside Will and tried to escape. Will thought he was faking it. Hannibal could free himself if he wanted to.

“Pretty,” Will groaned as he rolled himself on top of Hannibal. “But I don’t think you really want to escape.”

Hannibal abruptly bucked up against Will, trying to dislocate him. The next minutes they were wrestling. Will was turned on by the fight Hannibal put up, but there was something sharper and more dangerous to it as well. It felt like the mood could turn at any moment and they would be at each other’s throats. It made him fight harder and use every dirty trick he knew until Hannibal was under him, his clothes ripped with Will’s teeth around his jugular.

“I yield,” Hannibal said out of breath and collapsed, his hands flat on the ground. Distrusting Hannibal’s words, Will got up and sat on Hannibal’s butt, careful not to place his weight on the area of the back that had been operated on.

“Did you have fun today?” Will asked and pressed on Hannibal’s shoulders with his hands.

“Yes,” Hannibal said and groaned as Will’s hands slipped downwards.

“Good, let’s continue then.”

Will lifted himself up onto his knees and ordered Hannibal to lift his hips. He snuck his hand into Hannibal’s right pocket, fondling his erection through the fabric, pulled out the knife Hannibal carried and started to cut Hannibal’s clothes off.

Later, Will stared at the pieces of expensive clothing on the floor as they settled in bed. Hannibal was already dozing behind him. He had curled up around Will, satisfied and tired from their day’s work, and his breath hit Will’s neck at regular intervals. Will knew he should sleep too. They had another busy day ahead of them. Many busy days actually. Bedelia needed to be eaten and killed. The death needed to look like Connelly had done it and later, probably in a few weeks, Connelly needed to die. So much to do.

Will smiled and touched Hannibal’s arm, slung around his waist. He closed his eyes, ready for sleep to take him.

Husband, Will thought shortly before he fell asleep. Hannibal had called him husband.

The ghost of a smile moved his lips.

He didn’t dream that night.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter 10 + epilogue coming next week. You are not ready.

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

> We left our murder husbands happy in bed and ready to take care of Bedelia on the next day.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

~ Three ~

Chapter End Notes

First, the epilogue will be posted within 24 hours. <3

Second: *points at title*

Third: You might want to listen to this chapter of Rhast's podfic when it gets posted.

Epilogue

Chapter Summary

~Three~

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Please check out the art for this chapter by the wonderful huddstown15. <3

Will woke up on a boat, salt water splashing his face and the sound of the ocean surrounded him. He stared at the horizon and for one horrible moment he believed himself back in the past on his way to Europe to find Hannibal. He hadn't felt like this in decades. Their time travelling days were long over.

But the ocean was calmer and warmer than it had ever been during his trip to catch Hannibal. Also the boat seemed different, but there had been so many boats in his life, Will wasn't completely sure. He looked around and tried to figure out how he had ended up here. The last thing he remembered was going to sleep with Hannibal beside him.

"This is not the past," Will said to calm himself. He needed to figure out where he was.

He walked towards the cabin to have a look inside, but he couldn't get in. He didn't try to pry it open because he was too distracted by how his hands looked.

He had gotten used to the marks of age in the last decades. Hannibal had a thing about skincare and Will had followed his advice since the fall. Still, aging couldn't be helped. Now the skin of his hands were smooth and as he looked closer, Will realized that some of his scars where missing.

He raised his hands and touched his face. It too, was smoother than he remembered. Sharp fear took his breath away. His skin was younger and he felt younger too.

"Hannibal," Will said. His voice sounded familiar and different at the same time. "Hannibal?"

Nobody answered and as Will tried to open the door to the cabin with more force, it wouldn't budge.

Unsure of what to do, Will walked to the front of the boat and stared ahead. Land was coming

into sight. He couldn't make out if it was a big island or a landmass. The boat was quick and Will watched the coastline come closer and closer. There was small bay with a beach and a cliffside surrounding it.

When the boat drove into the bay Will thought he saw something on the otherwise empty beach.

"Impossible," Will whispered when he could make out the form. His insides twisted and he felt a weird mix of joy and fear.

The boat slowed down the closer it came to the beach and finally it gently bumped against the shore, staying upright in a defeat of physics.

Will didn't care. He ran to the ladder and got off the boat. He landed knee-deep in the water, surprised that his knees and hips didn't hurt and ran with an ease he hadn't experienced in years to the beach.

"Winston!" he called as the dog sprinted toward him in uncontained joy. Will got down on his knees and hugged the dog with a wide grin as Winston jumped up at him.

"Hey! Hey!" Will greeted him and let the dog lick all over his face as he petted through the soft fur.

"What are you doing here?" Will asked amazed. "And how are you alive?!"

Winston should be long dead by now after all. It had been decades since the fall from the cliff and Winston hadn't been young then. But he was young now, Will realized as he looked closer at the happy dog. Seeing his own youthful hands on the shiny fur made Will stop in his movements. Winston barked in displeasure. Lifelong instinct made Will scold him immediately.

"Behave," Will said and gripped Winston's head, looking closer at the dog.

"You should be dead," he said, suddenly motionless.

"I might be dead."

It felt true.

Will turned and looked back to the boat. It was gone and there was no evidence that it had ever been there. Reality tilted in Will's head. He gripped Winston's fur tight in an attempt to ground himself.

"Oh," Will said and sat down.

Winston barked again and pressed against Will's side.

"I think I'm dead," Will said and looked at Winston. The dog didn't understand of course, but

his open love and affection soothed Will's fear a little.

"I left Hannibal…" Will realized with a broken voice. He had promised never to leave but now he had.

"Fuck," Will cursed. Winston dropped onto his belly beside Will. Shaking, Will leaned over and pressed his face in Winston's fur.

"He doesn't do well when he's alone," Will said and felt tears fall.

Winston moved out from under him and as Will started to lift himself up, the dog licked away the tears. Will patted his head and stood up. He absently walked a few meters. The beach was empty as far as he could see and felt peaceful. If this was the afterlife, it looked very different from what he had expected. The fiery lava and torture instruments were missing.

The cliff was steep and Will couldn't imagine climbing it. Even with this rejuvenated body, he didn't think he could make it to the top. Instead he walked, with the happy dog at his side trying to reach the end of the beach. He never did reach it and neither he nor Winston ever got tired. No matter how far they wandered, the scenery didn't change and Will couldn't have pointed out any differences. Even his footsteps disappeared if he retraced his steps after a few minutes.

"Creepy," Will commented when he stopped where his footsteps faded. He sat down in the moist sand and Winston put his head on his lap.

"It's really good to see you, Winston," Will said petting Winston's head. He wondered, as he had many times since the fall from the cliff, if the dog had had a good life with Molly and Walter. "I missed you. And the others too, of course."

He had missed his pack. With Hannibal, they had gotten one or two dogs at most. After a few years, they got into the rhythm of moving whenever the dogs had died. Most of them had been older strays nobody else wanted and Will had felt kinship with them.

"I hope you didn't wait here for me the whole time," Will told him. Obviously, Winston couldn't answer, but having the dog with him made Will feel calmer. If his dog was with him for the afterlife, it wouldn't be so bad.

"We are waiting, aren't we?" Will realized and looked at the moving horizon between the waves of the sea and the sky.

"For Hannibal?" he asked, desperate and hopeful at the same time. There was no answer of course. Unless you counted Winston yawning and lying down to sleep. Will followed his example. He closed his eyes. It didn't feel like sleeping and when he opened his eyes, nothing had changed. Only Winston had left his side and was jumping around in the water.

"Great," Will said. "Wet dog."

But he got on his knees when Winston ran back to him and hugged him tight.

Time was slippery on the beach, Will realized quickly. The weather never changed, the sun never moved and he didn't get hungry or thirsty or even tired. Sometimes he slept, but not because he needed it. Sleep was another way to pass the time he barely felt. Winston found driftwood once in a while and they played catch for hours.

"I kind of thought Hannibal would kill himself if I died before him," Will told Winston after playing at some point. "After eating me, of course. Maybe go on a killing spree and go out in a blaze of glory."

Winston dropped down beside him, putting his head on Will's knees. Will shrugged.

"Or maybe just stop taking his meds," he added confessionally. "He has a heart condition, you know. His doctor is trying to get him to eat less meat. His reaction was hilarious."

Will hadn't thought Hannibal was still able to have hissy fits, but he had pouted for weeks. Will had found it endearing. He hadn't told Hannibal of course.

"Where the fuck are you?" Will asked the horizon days or weeks later. He wanted Hannibal. Winston barked beside him and Will sighed. He looked down, the dog looked as carefree as ever.

"Another walk?" Will offered.

Even later, thunder woke Will and he blinked confused. Thunder was… new on this never changing beach. He got up and saw some dark clouds in the distance. Lightning struck and suddenly the clouds dispersed. Will frowned as he watched the spot where the clouds had been. There was movement at that point and after endless moments, Will could make out a boat.

Please! He thought feverishly and walked closer to the water.

Slowly it sailed in his direction and Will hugged himself as he waited.

"Please," Will whispered aloud. Beside him Winston barked once and Will reached out to touch his head without looking down. The boat got closer and Will could make out someone standing up front as he had been. His heart was beating wildly in his chest and he could barely stop himself from walking into the ocean. Instead he waited, his right hand gripping Winston's fur and his left hand slung around his own waist.

And then finally; finally he could see who was standing on the boat.

“Thank you.” It burst out of Will as he recognized Hannibal. He went down on his knees unable to handle his relief. His arms were holding him up, but they were shaking. Winston was running around him, yipping and barking, trying to find out what was wrong.

“Sorry,” Will murmured and wrapped his arm around Winston, hugging him.

He looked up, afraid the boat would be gone, but he could still see it and it was even closer than before. Will pressed a kiss on Winston’s head. Then he stood and waited. As it came closer Will saw that Hannibal too was younger than when Will had last seen him. He looked the same age as when they had fallen from the cliff.

They smiled at each other over the waves. When the boat hit the beach, Will was there with Winston at his side. He walked into the water as Hannibal gracefully climbed down the ladder. Will moved towards as Hannibal reached for him. Their lips met, but they lost their balance and tumbled into the water. They scrambled up without letting go of each other. Winston barked from the beach and the boat was gone.

“Hannibal,” he said, desperately hugging him.

“Will,” Hannibal answered and held onto him, his head resting on Will’s shoulder. “You were gone.”

“Sorry,” Will whispered. “Sorry.”

He couldn’t let go and Hannibal seemed to feel the same. They stood in the gentle waves until Winston’s barking made them separate.

“I see you found another dog,” Hannibal remarked as Will took his hand and pulled him towards the beach.

“Not just any dog,” Will answered. He looked back to ensure Hannibal was still there and to smile at him. “Don’t you recognize him?”

They reached the sand and Winston ran around them a few times.

“Winston?” Hannibal asked frowning. The dog sat down in front of Hannibal, looking expectantly up at him. With a fake sigh, Hannibal reached out with his free hand and patted his head.

“He is dead,” Hannibal said and stared at Will. “So are you.”

“And you?” Will suggested.

Realization dawned on Hannibal’s face.

“Ah,” he said. “I assume that explains the vanishing boat and the suddenly dry clothes.”

Dry…, Will checked himself and his clothes were indeed dry as were Hannibal’s. He

shrugged and only briefly wondered how that had happened. This wasn't the real world.

"It's some kind of afterlife," he offered. "I've been here for a while."

"Seven months," Hannibal said darkly and avoided Will's eyes, staring at the horizon instead. "Seven months and 4 days."

"No hours?" Will asked and stepped closer. Hannibal leaned against him.

"I woke up and you were cold."

Fuck, Will thought and pulled Hannibal's arms around him. He could feel Winston leaning against their legs as if he felt support was needed.

"I'm here now," he whispered.

"Yes," Hannibal said and they stood in silence until Winston got bored and left them.

Will had a thousand questions about their deaths and the time apart, but now wasn't the time.

"I'm glad you weren't alone," Hannibal noted as they separated.

"Me too," Will agreed. "It's a weird place. Time is… weak here, you don't feel it passing."

Hannibal nodded.

"I feel very calm," he noted.

"Yes, that's another part of it," Will said and pulled on Hannibal's hand. Winston had run off and Will didn't want to lose sight of him.

"Nothing changes, emotions are a bit muted and the beach itself is endless."

"That doesn't sound too pleasant."

Will shrugged and they walked. Winston was still in front of them but had slowed down to make sure they were still following him.

"It was fine. I was waiting and didn't mind."

He squeezed Hannibal's hand.

"I'm so glad you're here now."

"I'm sorry it took me a while."

Will smiled at him and Hannibal smiled back and squeezed his hand.

Winston barked and as Will looked for the dog he frowned and stopped.

“That’s weird,” he said. In the distance, Winston sat at the foot off the cliffside, but something looked different. The cliff behind him looked like…

“Is that a passage?” Hannibal asked.

“Or a cave?” Will wondered.

They stared at it and Winston sat still, waiting for them.

“Let’s find out?” Hannibal asked.

“Sure,” Will agreed. “Why not.”

They started walking.

And this is how the story ends.

Chapter End Notes

I wrote an afterword that's twice as long as AO3 allows. XD
If you want to read me saying thank you to everyone who helped writing the series, including you, please go and read it on my blog.

Love, Mara

Works inspired by this one

[podfic] Between Deaths by Rhast

[COVER] Between Deaths by TFE

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!